



# GDT

GRAPHIC DESIGN TEACHER

MAGAZINE

THIS ISSUE FEATURES MASTER OF COMMUNICATION DESIGN EXEGESIS  
**TEACHING TEACHERS:  
LEARNING THROUGH GRAPHIC LITERACY**

**SPECIAL COMIC:**

"I HAVE TO TEACH  
PHOTOSHOP AGAIN!"

**DESIGNING YOUR  
ACTIVITIES**

UNDERSTANDING THE  
ALIGNED CURRICULUM

**LEARNING  
THROUGH DESIGNING**

AN INTERVIEW WITH  
ROBERTO BRUZZESE

**WHAT IS GOING ON  
WITH YOUR STUDENTS?**

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS  
& LEARNING OUTCOMES

# **Teaching Teachers: Learning through Graphic Literacy**

This exegesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Design (Communication Design)

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# Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Roberto Bruzzese  
March 31, 2009

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## Introduction

This research was initiated by my experiences in teaching graphic design within private study-abroad colleges in Europe. As a new teacher I faced many pedagogical challenges, and began to wonder if there was a better way to approach teaching graphic design. This exegesis documents my exploration of pedagogical awareness in graphic design education and how graphic literacy can facilitate this awareness. Through a reflective practice of reading, designing, teaching, and conversation, I have uncovered my perceptions and conceptions as a teacher and discovered how some pedagogical principles can help the teaching and learning environment. I have used this knowledge to create an awareness of these principles through the comic language.

Most graphic design educators do not have formal teaching training; they learn and teach based on personal experience, modelling the teaching practices of their own teachers and peers. I discuss why this is the case in SECTION 1. Many factors inform and enable good teaching practices including: a teacher's personal and professional experience; the environment where teaching takes place; and the particular context and expectations existing at a teaching institution. These concepts are explored in SECTIONS 2/4/5 through reflection on my recent teaching and within two comic episodes, one of which discusses teachers' perceptions and approaches to learning while the other looks at the students' perceptions and levels of knowledge to help build objectives. The comic provides a safe and visual environment that depicts scenarios that teachers may relate to during teaching.

In SECTIONS 3/6, I describe how an understanding of pedagogical principles and theories supports the practice of knowledge creation through teaching and learning. These pedagogical principles and theories are not specific to graphic design but they do help create familiarity with a lexicon that is relevant, though uncommon, to most graphic design teachers. When I started teaching, I had never heard the terms "student-centred learning" or "teaching and learning activities", nor did I understand the value of an "aligned curriculum" and how it facilitates a well-designed assessment. This personal example cannot be generalized for all teachers, but as I state in SECTIONS 7/9 during my research interviews I found that even established design teachers were unaware of these general teaching principles.

Pedagogical principles and theories are often communicated in literature that crosses many disciplines, such as psychology and the social sciences. In this research, I have come to identify that this multidisciplinary nature is not the problem but rather, it is the lexicon used to communicate the information that gets in the way for many graphic design teachers.

Graphic designers are trained to understand and manipulate visual imagery and value the elegant communication of complex problems. Most have an excellent sense of graphic literacy and are able to critically analyse and discuss visual problems. In Section 8, I describe how this research has sought to bridge this obvious communication gap by exploring graphic methods to translate the pedagogical lexicon into a form that is accessible or relevant for new graphic design teachers.

SECTIONS 9/10 reflect on my methods and process of exploration. Here I describe my learning experiences; the exercise I undertook and how I applied it to my practice. I also discuss how the undertaking of interviews was the turning point in this research. More importantly, these sections describe how I undertook each method of this research project and why they aided in the development of my argument.

My personal goal from this research project was to build a more comprehensive foundation in the teaching of graphic design and gain the ability to become a better teaching and learning facilitator.



### Graphic Literacy

For this research, the term Graphic Literacy refers to how graphic design teachers have the ability to visually represent highly cognitive information through the use of graphic principles and elements to aid in the facilitation of learning. See SECTION 8 for more information.

## How it all Began

“I’m not going to tell you all the answers but I will help you see them for yourself”

(Daniel H. Pink, *Johnny Bunko*, 2008)

This research project was initiated by my teaching experiences in various private colleges. Through some serious questioning on the future of graphic design education, the conceptions and perceptions of my students and myself, I thought a research degree would be one way to explore the issues. I wanted to solve the problems I was experiencing in graphic design education and develop my skills as an educator.

I was initiated into the teaching arena, as many are, by chance and economic circumstances. My practice in graphic design had developed through persistent freelancing in Vancouver, Canada. While not completely self-taught, I have completed a program in publishing and design. Originally I enrolled into a Fine Arts degree with an interest in photography. It was not until halfway through the first-year of the foundation art courses that I discovered graphic design. From there I was faced with a choice to either continue the degree program in communication design at a fine art university—where I suspected that the remaining three years would be heavily fine art focused—or leave. I left to find a school that had more of a studio-based learning approach. I enrolled in a publishing and design diploma program at a local college where their emphasis was on technology and professional practice. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the curriculum I missed the theory and foundational principles of graphic design.



This led to an important gap in my design knowledge that was only recognised after many years of practice and reflection. It took years before I understood the true value of a degree in graphic design.

While I was in college, many design teachers encouraged students to become generalists. The ‘know everything’ designer was hot in the market and still is today. I enjoyed identity design and exhibition design. Soon after college, another designer and myself opened Parpiùfo Communications. We worked with businesses from small to large, and it was one of the most important and steep learning curves I have faced in practice. In 2002 I left the studio and moved to Florence, Italy and this is where my journey into teaching and research begins.

Florence is definitely not a city with a rich graphic design culture. The closest you come to modern design on some days is approximately five hundred years old. There are letterpresses everywhere and digital technology was allocated to the wealthiest American institutions. Graphic design was a by-product of fine art and its purpose was to decorate and give clients ‘a modern look’.

Italy is not some sort of ancient crypt without connections to the modern world because institutes like Milan University are some of the most advanced research departments in communication design in Europe. But Florence is not Milan. Colleges in Florence are plentiful. At last count there are approximately 126 study-abroad colleges and universities that hold their campus in Florence.

## “Are you sure you know how to teach Photoshop?”

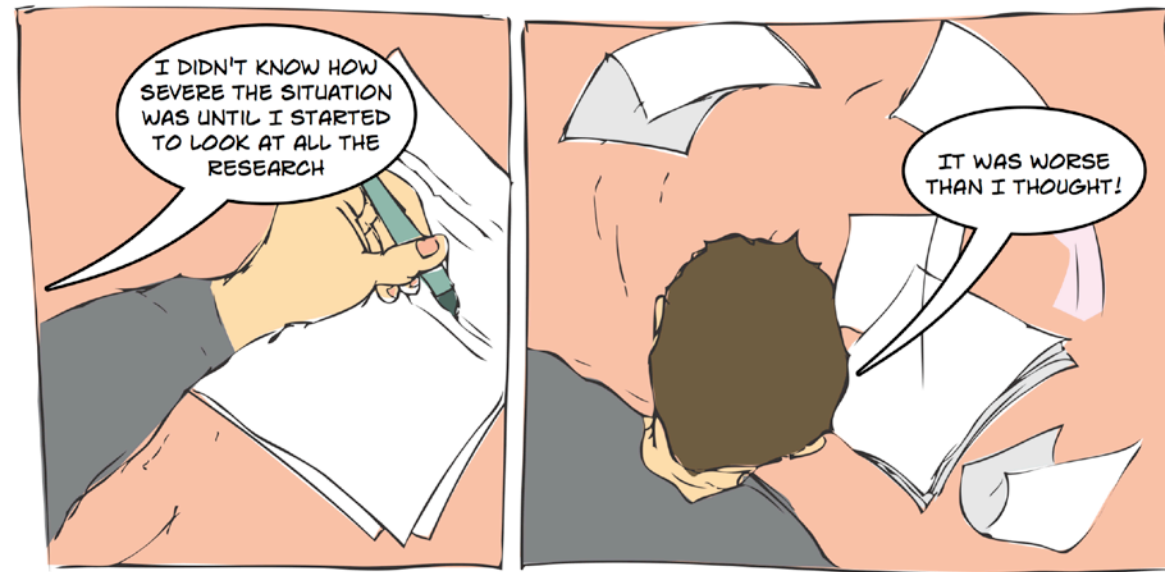
Most are American institutions but there has been a recent resurgence of Italian art and design colleges for both Italian and English speakers. Thousands of students come to Florence each year looking for a romanticised study-abroad program that will give them travel time as well as the opportunity to learn traditional crafts. While fine art and language studies are the prevailing enrolments, graphic design has also emerged as a viable contestant. At present there are no degree granting programs in graphic design or communication design in the city of Florence; consequently, many Italian students either move to Milan to study fine art or enrol in a private college.

I began teaching at a small local design college that focused on technical skills to a student body mostly made up of Europeans. My interview consisted of a portfolio review and a question “Are you sure you can teach Photoshop?” I was now the only graphic design teacher at the college. I had to write up an outline for my courses that were primarily based on the instruction of *Adobe Creative Suite* to beginners and advanced students and at the same time ‘slip in’ some communication theory and design principles. The course structure was left up to me with no mention of objectives or graduate outcomes to implement. It was a design educators dream or, as I came to realise a nightmare.

I learned how to teach through experience. There were no guidebooks or mentors to rely on. The most you got was a pat on the back and a “Buena Fortuna” (good luck). My experience with sessional teaching in Europe and in Australia is that there is a ‘check-in, check-out’ mentality to teaching. The teacher does not help create or influence the institutional learning environment but acts as an invisible player. This of course affects the teaching and learning within the courses and the level of engagement of the students (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999).

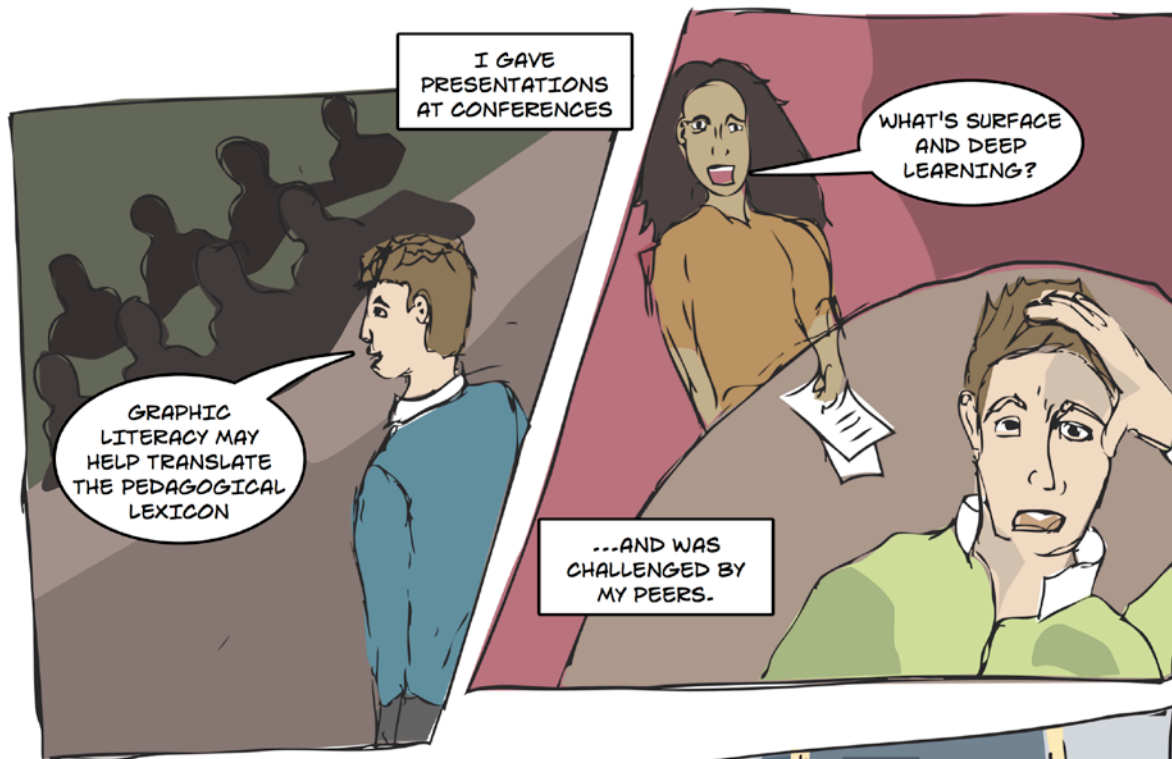
After some time, I was teaching quite permanently at two colleges one was European the other an American institution. Quite early on I noticed a familiar pattern emerging from working with the students—nearly all of them perceived graphic design as a technology course. Graphic design was about the *Adobe Creative Suite* and not the research of understanding and the visual communication of a problem or artefact. I noticed that the students were missing the process and critical thinking skills that are required in practice. The problem was, I did not know how to effectively introduce this into the course.





# The Journey begins here...









## Section 1

### What's happening in graphic design education?

Throughout its history, graphic design education has had an inconsistent relationship with pedagogical theory and principles. Early graphic designers coming from other fine art disciplines developed the practice as a trade activity (Buchanan, 1998). Schools were formed to teach basic skills within 'commercial art' that was required for practice and thus many educators followed a 'master and apprentice' teaching model; relying on their own experiences in practice to educate neophyte designers (Thompson, 2006). As the profession progressed, a substantial pedagogical shift occurred in the 1980s. Educators started to introduce concepts from other disciplines such as sociology, literature and architecture to help students analyse and discuss how design was developing within practice (Heller, 2006). More importantly, the validation of terms such as semiotics and deconstruction became an approach to build on teaching methodologies in which helped to engage a more critical look at graphic design's use of aesthetics and function (Heller, 2006).

At this time theory also became an important part of graduate studies that helped fuel the design language. In the late 1990s the movement of authorship started to advance graphic design from being a trade activity towards the notion of using research to justify design solutions. Educator Steven Heller (2006) argues that authorship enabled educators to help students break away from the conventions of graphic design with the

aid of the desktop publishing revolution because the movement described designers as creators, rather than merely 'styling' of artefacts.

Looking back to the 1970s, graphic design institutes began to multiply, especially in North America and Europe. Decreasing enrolments in the fine arts fuelled institutions to market towards the graphic design sector and enrolments have been increasing ever since (McCoy, 1997). Unfortunately for this new wave of students, the limited number of qualified teachers became a problem. Many institutions hired, and still hire recent masters graduates with little professional experience to teach entire programs (McCoy, 1997). At the same time the number of 1-2 year design programs increased, claiming to teach graphic design while in reality only teaching software skills. This was partly due to the desktop publishing revolution starting in 1985. The accessibility of software and reproduction technologies led to a great shift in practice but also created difficult challenges for graphic design educators. Now everyone could become a graphic designer! Educators were suddenly forced to incorporate an increasing range of technical software skills in their graphic design curricula to keep up with the 'design' skills of the public. The professional role of the graphic designer, printer and publisher became blurred and anyone with a computer, a layout program and some templates could produce a brochure, a catalogue or create a logo (Garland, 2005).

“ Universities need to set as a mission goal the improvement of the nexus between research and teaching... The aim is to increase the circumstances in which teaching and research have occasion to meet, and to provide rewards not only for better teaching or for better research but also for demonstrations of the integration between teaching and research.”

(Hattie and Marsh 1996 p. 533)





For practice, this revolution also changed the expectations of clients. The quality of a design was now in the hands of a non-designer and its value shifted in the eyes of the client. Educator Meredith Davis (1997) explains that some clients could not see the difference between an educated graphic designer and non-designers' work and clients were not willing to pay for the difference.

While it is fortunate some educators and institutions have understood that the education of graphic design students would have to transform and focus more on changes in social and communication environments, too many design schools continue to promote the ideology of desktop publishing as graphic design. This has led to an increasing amount of new teachers who are unaware of the theoretical dialogue and teaching and learning principles that can aid in the development of positive learning environments. Consequently some teachers, myself among them, find it difficult to encourage process-led enquiries and deep learning approaches in the classroom.

But how are we to facilitate this pedagogical awareness to educators? How can graphic design use its experience in visual communication and translate pedagogical theory and principles that can assist in creating good teaching and learning environments? Through reflective exercises, diagrams, teaching journals, interviews and literature reviews, I have researched the complexities of pedagogical theories and principles in order to translate its lexicon through a graphic language that may be more suitable for sessional graphic design teachers.

This project uses comic language to create situations or scenarios of a graphic design teaching and learning environment.

### **The comic combines research taken from practice and my understanding of pedagogical theory and principles in order to demonstrate to new teachers some things to consider while teaching.**

It allows the readers to reflect and discover their own perceptions and conceptions through the multi-modal qualities of the comic language.

#### **Research and Pedagogy**

In the late 1990s educational theorists such as Sharon Poggenpohl Helmer, Linda Drew and Paul Nini raised their voices to the call of research methodologies in design education and practice (Throop, 2006). Practice was changing and it called for graduates to be able to solve complex communication problems that went beyond technical skills and precision form making. These educators did research on the importance of research methods, many of which come from the humanities and social science disciplines, and discussed why their implementation is crucial for graphic design education. In undergraduate design education, studies have shown that research methods within enquiry-based learning facilitate highly cognitive learning outcomes (Shreeve, Bailey & Drew, 2004). Institutes such as the *Ohio State University* communication design department are using user-centred research within their undergraduate curricula to help develop design processes that creates solutions through the involvement of

**i**  
NOTE ON THE TERM RESEARCH: THE WORD RESEARCH WILL BE USED TO DESCRIBE DESIGN RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES SUCH AS LITERATURE REVIEWS, VISUAL RESEARCH, REFLECTIVE EXERCISES, ETHNOGRAPHY AND RESEARCH THROUGH DESIGN.

a greater number of stakeholders in teaching and learning projects (Nini, 2005). Thus, research methods are helping shift the idea that graphic design is not only the communication of image and text but also carries the ability to help develop strategic solutions in complex environments. Hattie and Marsh (1996) discuss the strong link between research and teaching and how research can lead to the stronger development of good teaching practices. More and more graphic design programs are integrating design research in their curricula because it helps students develop process-orientated knowledge within a design problem. Research also allows students to view design problems within a complex environment where different skills are needed to visually communicate possible solutions.

#### **How does research help teaching?**

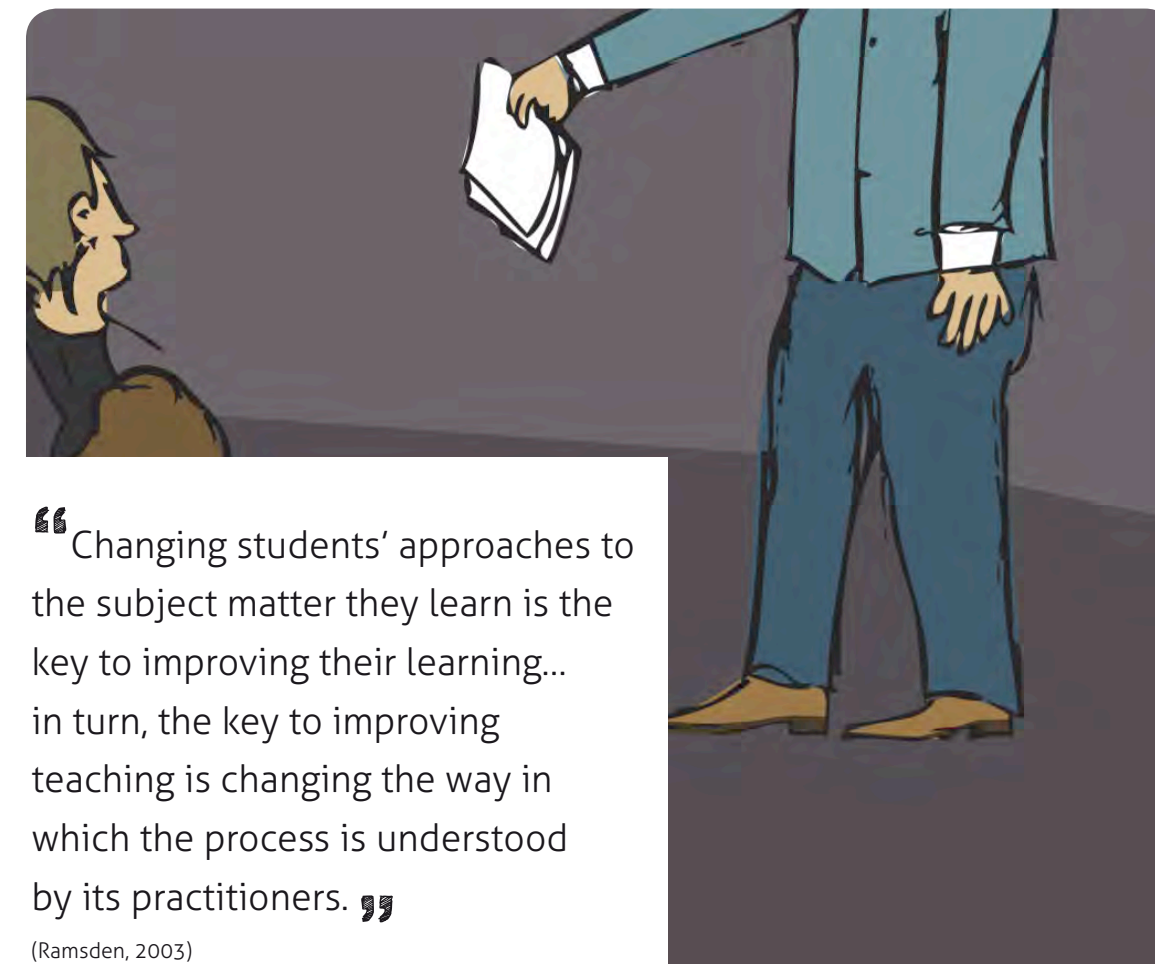
Research methods such as human-centred enquiries, literature reviews, reflective practice and ethnography have become part of the learning activities within graphic design institutes. Enquiry-based learning methods have helped students become more responsible for their learning because the process is student-centred, thus students develop knowledge through experience (Drew, 2007). Through these research methods, graphic design students can widen their understanding of design and help drive more process oriented outcomes.

It is not just research integration that can help facilitate a good learning environment though. Since the late 1970s educators and researchers have been highlighting aspects of pedagogical principles and theory. In 1976 Ference Marton and Roger Säljö (1976) introduced the idea of surface and deep approaches to pedagogy. They discussed that these two approaches were not personality traits or learning styles but different approaches that students may adopt depending on their perception of the task. The same students can adopt either a surface or deep

approach to different tasks and swap between the learning styles. It is also important to note that teachers also may adopt either of these 'styles' within their teaching activities. Through casual discussions and interviews with educators in both public and private graphic design institutions, there were many teachers who did not understand specific pedagogical terminology such as "surface and deep" learning but they did recognize the concept once explained. They could also pinpoint and visualize scenarios that depicted various teaching and learning approaches.

What are surface and deep learning and teaching approaches? Educator Paul Ramsden discussed how deep learning involves the critical analysis of new ideas, linking them to other concepts and principles and the theorizing of abstract relationships to be used in problem solving and process-orientated skills. Surface learning is even more recognizable especially in recent graphic design enrolments because it describes how students unconditionally accept and memorise theories, principles and practices without the discovery of their meaning. "Surface learning leads to superficial retention of material and does not promote the understanding of knowledge long-term" (Ross, Bell, 2007). Many new and established graphic design teachers can spot a surface approach right from the first class. While identification of surface learners is important, the difficult task is helping students make the transfer towards a deep approach and the design of the teaching and learning activities to facilitate this transition. Much research has also been disseminated regarding how the teachers' perception and conception of the learning environment may also shift how students approach their learning.

More importantly, teachers need to continually reflect on their own perceptions and conceptions of the learning environment to aid in their understanding and advancement of pedagogy (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999).



“Changing students' approaches to the subject matter they learn is the key to improving their learning... in turn, the key to improving teaching is changing the way in which the process is understood by its practitioners.”

(Ramsden, 2003)





# The GDTs

graphic design teachers

**“I just don’t understand them (students).”**

{SECTION 2}

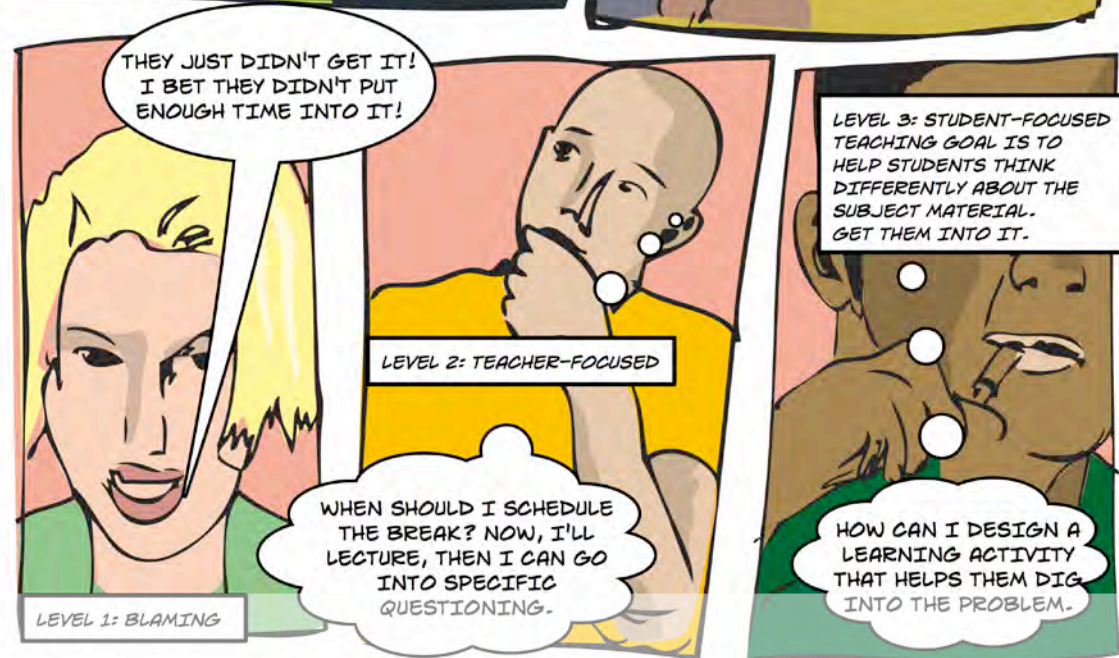




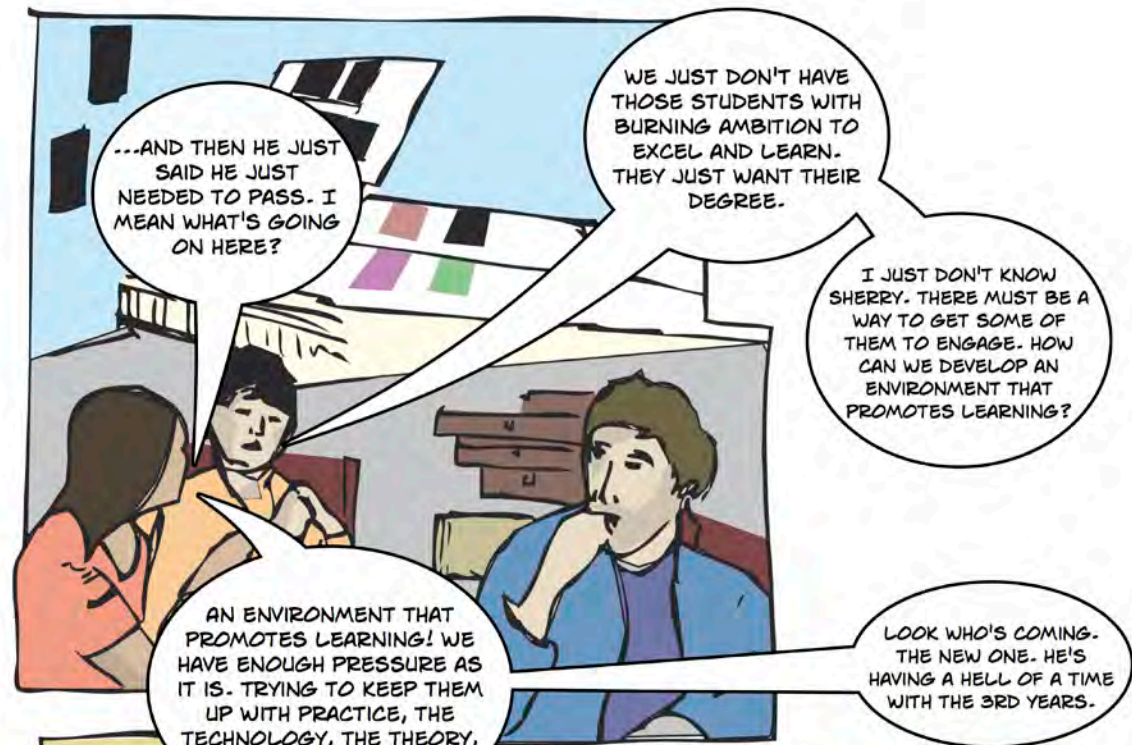




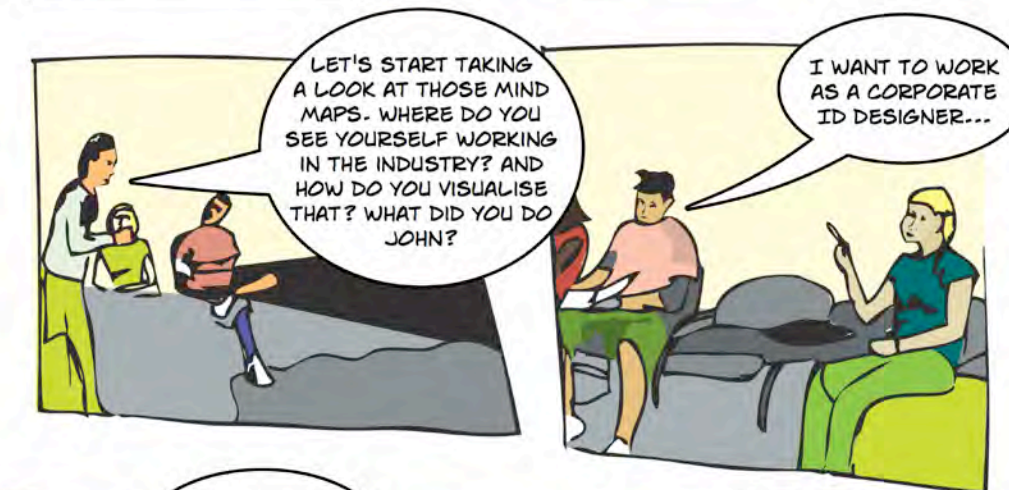








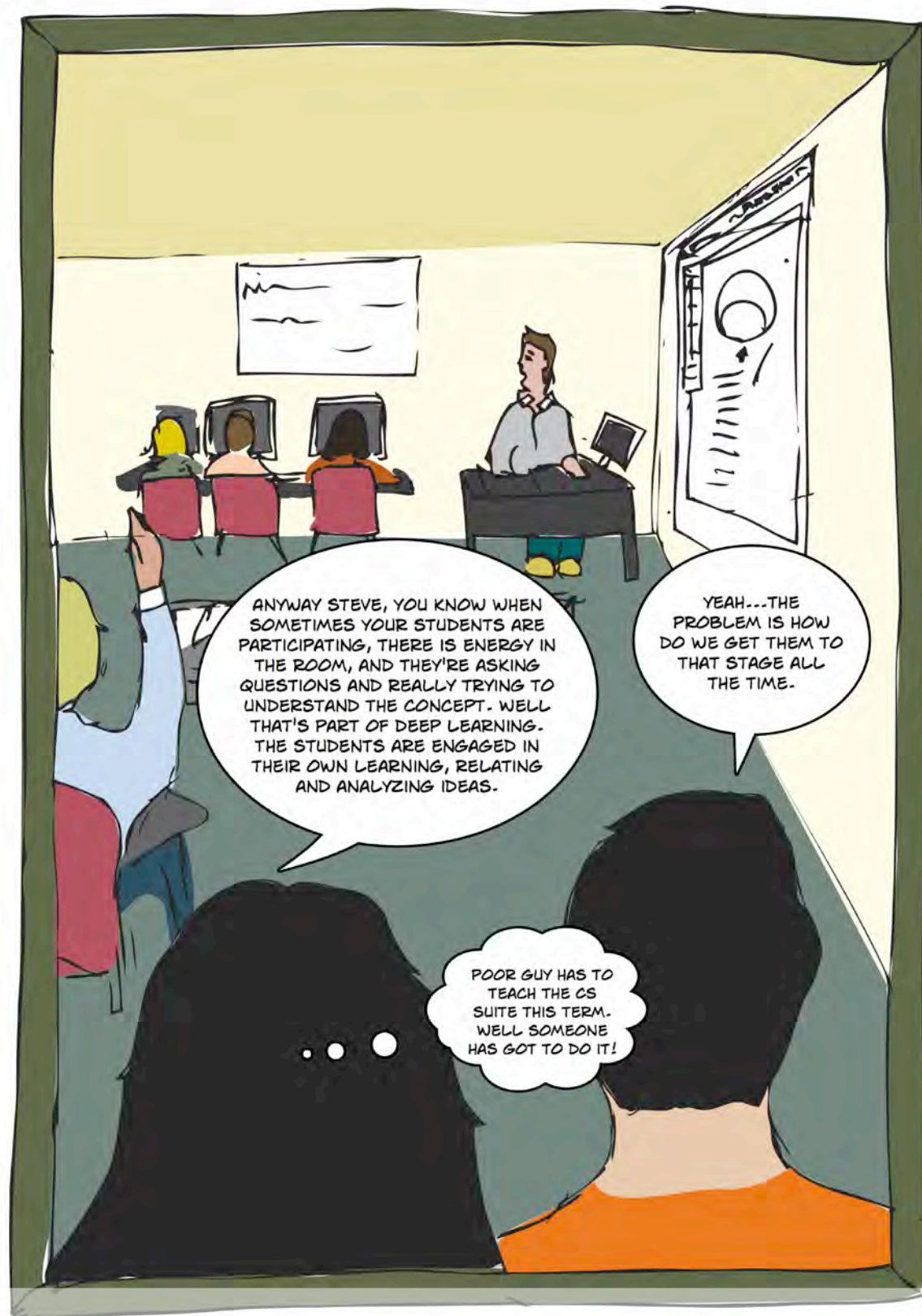




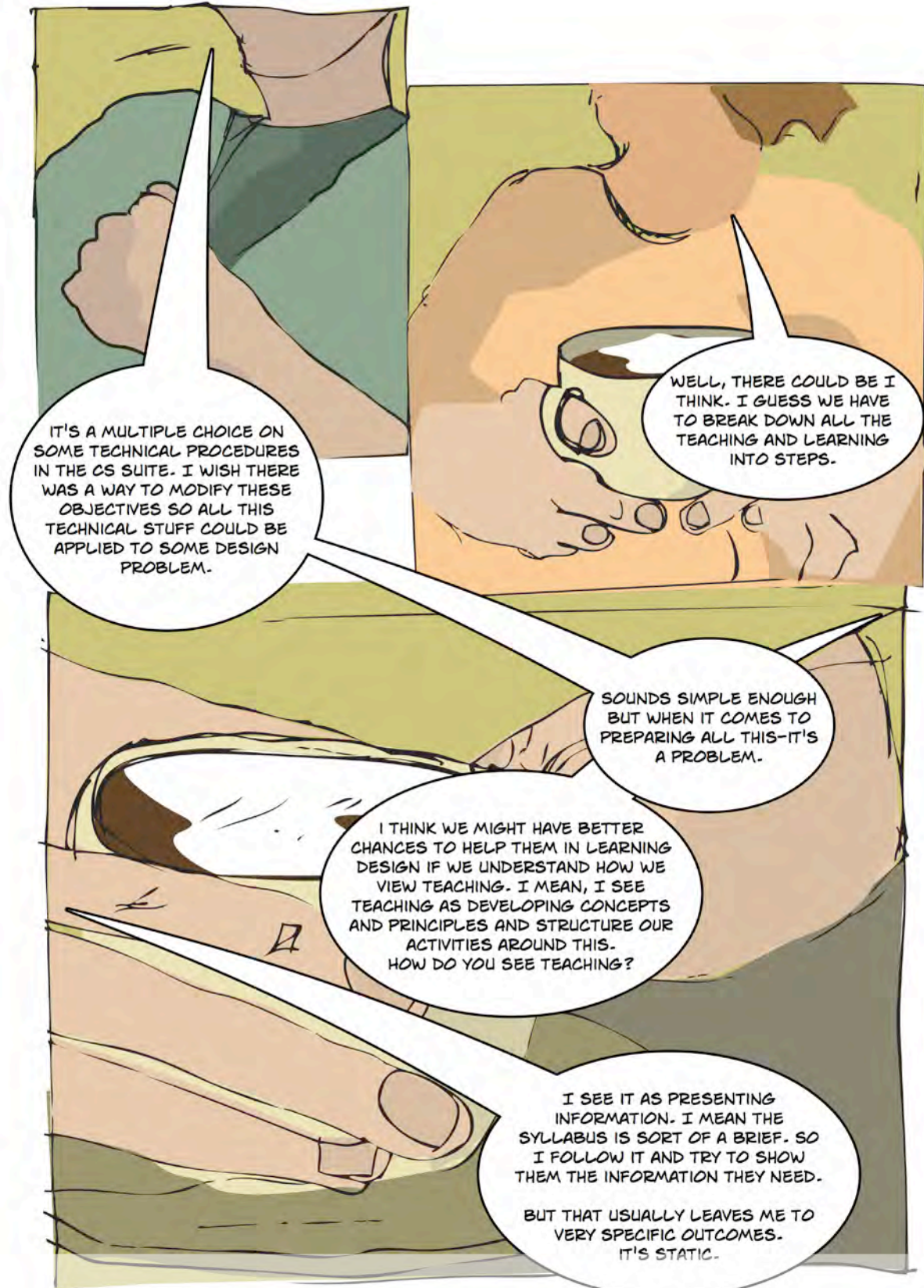




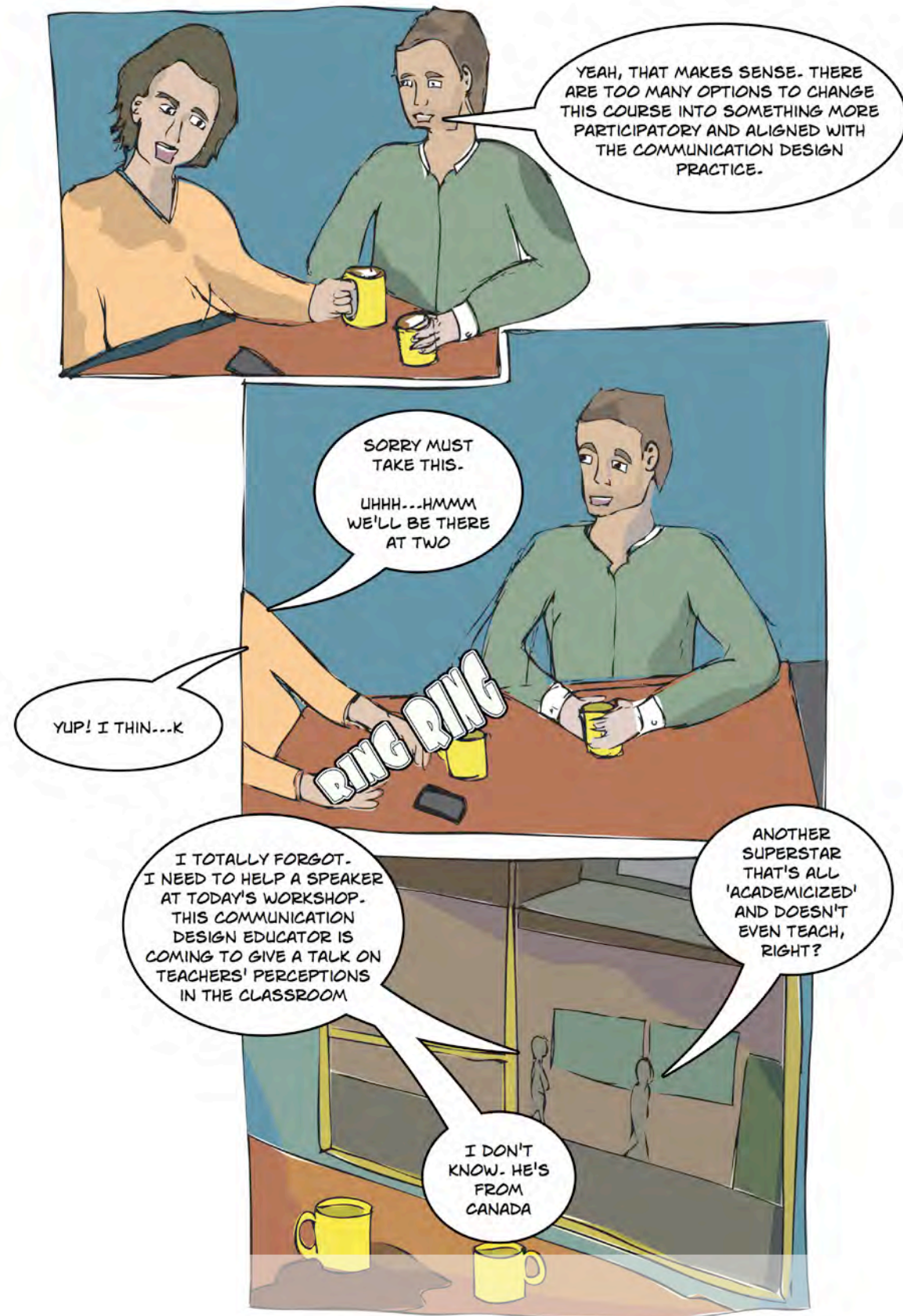




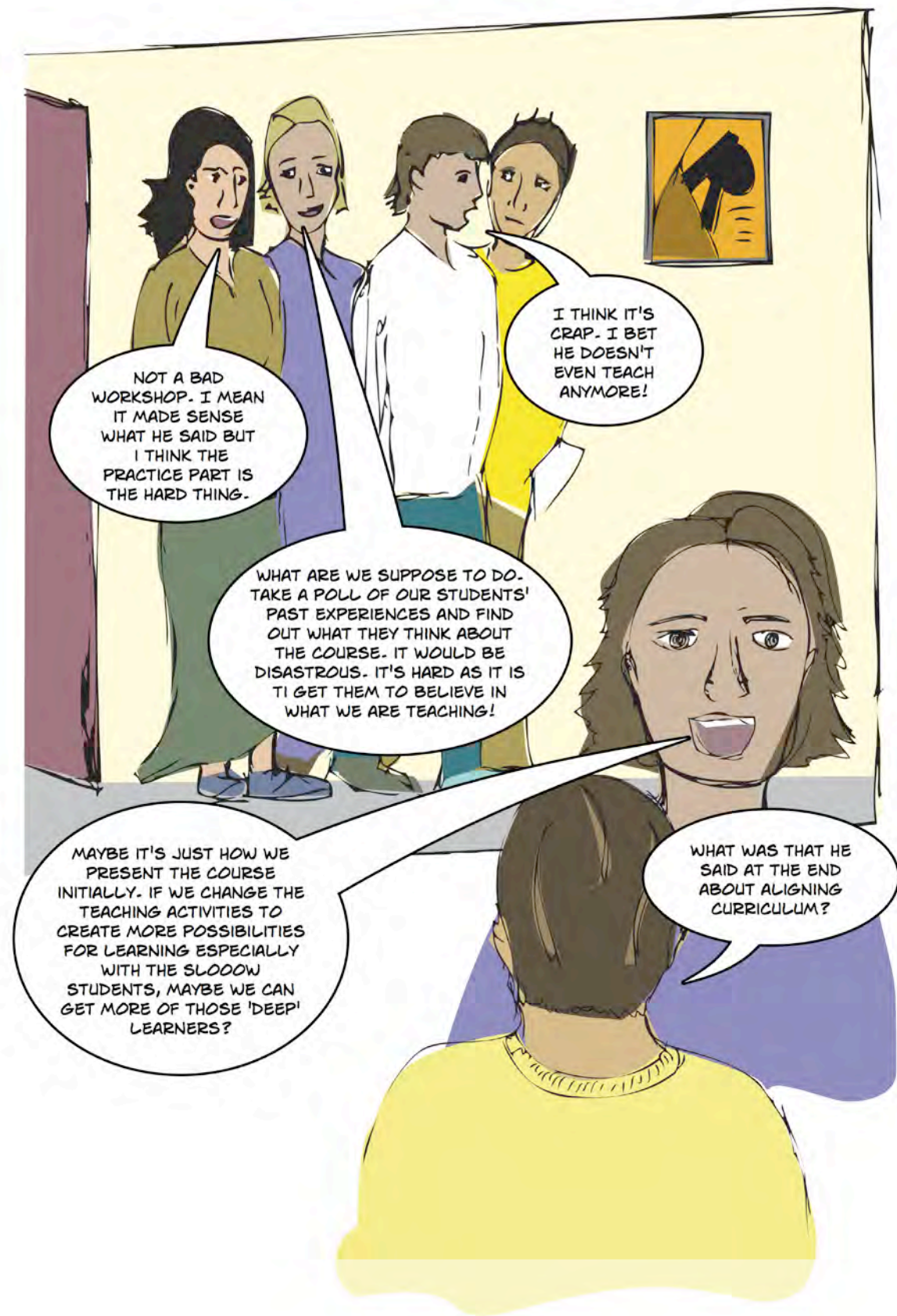














## Section 3

### The aligned curriculum

In order to understand how pedagogical principles could be used within graphic design education to help facilitate good teaching and learning environments, I had to research educational theories and principles. At the same time I also needed to reflect on perceptions and conceptions of my past teaching experiences in graphic design. To do this I created a blog that documented the exploration of my perceptions and the forces that interact with teaching starting from my first experiences in Florence, Italy. The use of the blog as a reflective space helped me understand my teaching practice. Concurrently, through the knowledge acquired in a literature review, I discovered teaching and learning principles to inform mine and other graphic design educators teaching practices.

The aligned curriculum is based on educator John Biggs' principle of constructive alignment. The principle states that in order to help achieve a good teaching and learning environment that is student-centred (Trigwell, Prosser et al, 1999); the curriculum must be designed in a manner that the teaching and learning activities, assessment and learning outcomes are developed in relation to each other. The objectives must be referenced in the assessment and the teaching and learning activities (TLA) should be referencing the objectives and learning outcomes.

Biggs (2003) describes constructive alignment as a method where students build their knowledge through the manner that they approach the learning activity and that the intended outcomes, expressed as a verb; need to be present in the teaching/learning activities and assessment to see if the outcome has been achieved. For example, the educator must describe what the intended learning outcome is from an objective and apply those verbs towards the teaching/learning activities and the assessment task. Every element is aligned fundamentally.

1. Describe the intended learning outcome in the form of a verb, the content, and context.
2. Build a learning environment that uses teaching and learning activities that address the verb
3. Use assessment tasks that also contain that verb.
4. Transform judgments into grading criteria.

(Biggs, 2003)

#### Applied to a typographic lesson

1. Applying principles of design to typography, creating messages
2. Apply repetition to the given glyph to create a form that communicates X
3. Apply line to the given glyph to create a form that communicates X
4. Demonstrate your application of design principles in typography through this given paragraph.

#### Reflective Blog \* past teaching experiences

13/11/2007

*The day to day:*

*Most people teaching in art and communication in private schools in Florence struggle enough to make a decent income let alone to try and understand pedagogy. One semester you might be working 30 hours per week and the next struggling to pay rent. This often created instability in the teaching staff especially because there were no fixed positions. The number of teachers and the quality of teachers usually depended on the semester enrolment of the students. In Italy, very few colleges offer teachers any type of stable contracts. This caused, in my opinion, huge problems for teachers who were looking just as I was to improve the educational quality of their departments. Why put in the time, if you might not be there next semester. In this school, titles were handed down to teachers like feel-good gifts. Wow, I'm now Coordinator of the Design Department. What does this mean?*



External Problems:

*Running an art school in Florence can't be easy. There are a couple dozen colleges and universities now trying to get as many students as they can to take a semester off from their home school in North America. Some are quite large and some are very small, but competition seems to be very tough. The colleges that seem to do well are not family-run businesses but organizations registered in North America with a board of directors. They may start as family-run but in my opinion schools should have as many external staff as they can because it brings different perspectives and ideas into an organization that might not see otherwise. With high competition many schools need to find outside associations that can bring in a number of students each semester.*



## The question may be what is the appropriate learning activity for the student?

One of the major steps in building an aligned curriculum is the understanding of the surrounding forces that affect its design. Forces may include institutional criteria, teaching and learning support within an institution, departmental/institutional perceptions of the learning environment and the physical teaching environment. In the case of my experience in Florence, my perceptions of the teaching and learning support and institutional criteria may have caused an unfavourable reaction to how I structured teaching and learning activities and my perception towards learning outcomes.

While many educators do understand and use constructive alignment in their teaching practices, there are still many programs that either do not understand or are unaware of its benefits. There are several reasons why unaligned teaching is still prevalent. First, traditional transmission theories of teaching ignore alignment (Biggs, Tang, 2006). This common method is based on the students' grades and how they compare to each other. Second, many teachers are not only unaware of this principle but also choose to ignore it because they feel there is nothing wrong with the current method of teaching. This also relates to the aforementioned levels of teaching and how a teacher's reflection creates improvements on how students learn. Educators Trigwell and Prosser (1996a) discuss this as a Teacher-focused transmission approach (TFT). They state that teachers who have prior experiences in teaching but limited conceptions of the teaching environment are more likely to think of teaching as only to expand the student's knowledge, thus limiting the many ways in which a student may participate in their own learning in a deep manner.

*Also schools need to have associations with numerous universities in North America. To do this, private colleges advertise the "learning experience" in Florence as a study vacation. See Europe first, and then try to squeeze in some learning. This creates a strange atmosphere for both the teachers and students. Teachers now have less pressure to teach valuable knowledge and instead focus on giving students "a good experience." Students' take learning less seriously and often see the college as a service provider. The customer is always right.*

**Support systems?**  
*Many teachers in this school tried to push their departments into an area of growth where there would be viable learning programs for the students and staff. One of the main problems is that there were no knowledgeable educators in the school or Florence to aid in any sort of curriculum building. Without any external or internal dialogue, most teachers gave up and just tried to get through a semester. For teachers who continued and pushed their ideas, it usually meant a one-way dialogue with the director who could not give any academic advice on how to proceed. Things were usually left to the last minute creating urgency on administrative procedures and not a full understanding of pedagogy.*

### Intended Learning Outcomes, Objectives and Graduate Attributes

Many educators are aware of the term objectives, as an aim or goal we set for students' learning during assessments and learning activities. In my past experience as a sessional teacher many teachers confuse objectives with graduate attributes, a term used to describe a quality that the student may possess after completion of the course. For example, "At the end of this course students will be able to communicate effectively and be competent in the typographic language used in practice." Objectives or its newly revised form intended learning outcomes (ILO) is "...a statement describing what and how a student is expected to learn after exposure to teaching" (Biggs, Tang, 2007). In his latest version of Teaching for Quality Learning, Professor Biggs revised the term objectives to ILO because it stresses a student-focused approach, i.e. what the student needs to learn rather than elements of a teacher's lesson plan. This reformation makes the learning outcome a student-centred perspective from the start. While teaching in European private design colleges and Australia, I have noticed that graduate attributes and objectives or ILO are rarely stated in course curricula. This makes it very difficult to create an aligned curriculum because they help to provide an intrinsically aligned syllabus that aids in the development of teaching/learning activities. As a result, more students are pushed towards a deeper learning environment.

### Teaching and Learning Activities

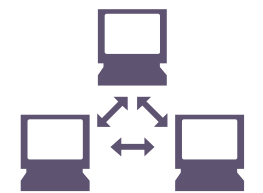
Once an educator understands the type of knowledge the student is to gain (procedural, declarative, functional) TLAs can be designed to align the ILO with graduate attributes and assessment that will help in creating deep learning environments. Each TLA is developed through the understanding of the ILO, not by the teachers' perceptions and not because there may happen to be a spare lecture theatre available (Biggs, Tang, 2007). While lectures and tutorials do have their place in design education, I have started to ask myself in my practice, "What and how will the students' learn and how does this activity align with their learning outcomes." The question may be what is the appropriate learning activity for the student?

13/11/2007



*In the midst of my proposal for the new graphic design program one of my main ideas was to introduce an element of research into the curriculum. At the time, I was discovering what design research meant and trying to teach an aspect of it to my students. What I meant by research at the time was for students to investigate design at a deeper level through reading, writing, discussing and designing for contexts related to graphic design for example sustainability and changes in practice. This was meant to get students to think about issues other than just finishing a project but to think about what they were doing while designing. What I was trying to get them to do was to constantly reflect, even though I was not aware of that.*

*By doing this research students seem to be able to communicate and think deeper about design. This was one of my goals since what I was trying to do was to get them away from solely being dependant on technology such as Photoshop®, InDesign®, etc.*





15/11/2007

*During the planning of the graphic design program I tried to condense as much as I could from what knowledge I had of a four year North American program to a one-year study abroad program. I decided on courses that I thought were essential in the learning process of a design student.*

Ingredients #1 (the courses):

*Graphic Design: Here students were to learn the principles, elements, language of shape, image and form, history, contemporary practices and how to visually communicate concepts. The second semester was going to be used as a student-developed research project. This course was very important to me because all these elements were being barely touched on in their current technical course of Digital Imaging. I proposed this course because it was something that I felt students needed to progress further in design practice. It was one way for me to combat the every increasing tendency of computer reliance in all process stages of graphic design projects.*

Many new or sessional teachers in private colleges seem to be the backbone of the teaching of technology related courses. For the unexperienced, this may cause the educator to rely on tutorials as the method of transmission because of past experiences in their own education and also because of institutional pressure of technology related graduate capabilities. Meredith Davis discusses in her article “Toto, I’ve got a Feeling we’re not in Kansas Anymore” that it is essential to start thinking about technology to transform cognitive perceptions and social practices (Davis, 2007). Technology is part of our social system and plays a great role in our interactions with people. She also defends that in many institutions courses are defined by the objects made and technical processes (motion graphics, web design, InDesign®) instead of situating them within problem-solving frameworks. For many sessional teachers a whole re-structuring of a program or even a curriculum might be entirely out of reach but there are ways through modifications in TLA to help students learn technology through active problem solving.

While the teaching of Photoshop® may be initially thought of as procedural knowledge base, educators may interweave functional knowledge into the learning environment to steer the learning activities and objectives away from classical tutorial activity towards a more encompassing learning experience, one that treats technology as a partner in the design process.

#### Suggestions:

1. Think of present day problems that require the application of technology.
2. Photoshop® is not only used for print. Expand usage towards more socially interactive problems.
3. Revise objectives that are not solely concentrated on objects. Becoming an expert of the pen tool does not help students develop deeper design knowledge. Asking students to discover how effective the tool is to designers and if it can be modified for a better user experience does.

*Typography: I wanted the students to learn about typography by covering all aspects from history and language to form, function and materials. I believe having a strong foundation in typography is a necessity to explore one practice. I've seen so much horrible use of type in graphic design that the understanding of type and language is just as important as learning about the image if not more. This course was planned to visit some historical presses in Florence giving students a historical foundation to their work in addition to small lectures and exercises exploring typography as communicative language through form. Digital Tools: When developing the program, I scrapped the course title of "Digital Imaging" and replaced it with "Digital Tools". I did this because I think for graphic design programs, the term digital imaging was misleading and has the condition that students of any major could take a Photoshop® class and direct it towards their art projects.*

For large classes, quite common in university design settings different TLAs may be required to help produce a conducive learning environment. While lecturing seems to be a common activity it is always important to remember that your goal is to help students create their own path to learning not trying to present a concept to fill a time period. Biggs et al (2007) suggests changing activities every 15 minutes or so, creating artefacts with exercises that may be self or peer assessed such as concepts maps used within buzz groups for a selected problem or discussion.

“What and how students learn depends to a major extent on how they will be assessed.”

(Biggs, Tang, 2007)

#### Reflections on Assessment

Assessment seems to be a ‘grey area’ in graphic design. As a design practitioner I was assessing the quality and performance of my own work, as well as reflecting on the feedback assessments from my clients. Rarely did I assess other designers’ work in any formal manner. One of the crucial components of a good learning environment is the structure of its assessment coupled within constructive alignment. At the beginning of this research, I had little knowledge of many principles and theories that help create good learning environments in graphic design teaching. The development of a solid understanding of the intricacies of assessment has helped me become a better teacher.



*The Digital Tools class is an important part of design today and I don't see graphic design in practice today without the use of the computer. My earlier decision to split graphic design elements and principles from technical learning was premature. I felt that students did not need the computer, but needed to develop these skills on different deeper levels rather than a quick overview. This course would be developed over two semesters. Students will be introduced to Photoshop® and Illustrator® in the first semester through communication design projects. In the second semester, students will be introduced to InDesign®, Acrobat® and maximizing their workflow techniques.*



*Web Design: This course was to be integrated in the second semester of study, where students would take a look at design from an interactive level. The purpose of this course was to give students a basic overview of how they may communicate projects through web-based applications. I felt this was important to the program because most of the other courses were directed to print design and there was a need to introduce students to other design disciplines. Web design and interaction design are growing fields, I recognize this as a designer and see great use of this knowledge in graphic design. Advertising, web design and publication design were to be electives with a self promotion class being taken in the last semester that was dedicated to the business of design and portfolio building techniques.*

Why..?

16/11/2007

*Thinking about the courses now, maybe they were too heavily based on North American graphic design courses. I was trying to essentially build a four-year program in a private study-abroad college where students enrolled for usually not more than one semester. Why would a student coming from an art college or university in their first to third year come to Florence and enrol in this program. Maybe the administration was right in asking me to try to integrate some aspect of Italian design into the courses so it would not be a repeat. The courses needed to offer a niche and still work for the students coming from Europe.*

How do we assess in graphic design? I have seen multiple-choice exams with structured questioning to curve ratings. Each of these methods have their place in assessment but it is very important to note that the selection of the method should align with the intended learning outcome to aid in the students' learning. Unfortunately aligned assessment is difficult to achieve, even more so with sessional/new design teachers. There are several factors for this but primarily, from observation and discussion, institutional forces and the teacher's perception and conception of assessment seem to take over.

With high enrolments in many design institutions, sessionals are hired to fill the gaps in course programs. Without a full-time focus and teaching support the general consensus seems to be get the assessments done as quickly as possible, which may lead to poor judgments and preparation. The teacher's perception and conception also play a great part in assessment. I am not sure how many times I have seen educators roll their eyes and groan when assessment times comes along. Staring at 80 or so posters to assess with various criteria seems daunting but instead of leaving assessment far in left field as the task awaiting, an aligned assessment in pre-planning could help integrate it into a shared experience for both teacher and student.

There are two main types of assessment, formative and summative. In formative assessment, the result provides feedback of the learning progress to the student and teacher. In this situation students take more responsibility for evaluating their work while the teacher and peer/external assessments help guide the learning.

Reflection (Schön, 1983) also plays a great part in formative assessment because it creates a dialogue during each stage of the project/activity. The student learns to critique their work without the fear of a final grade, creating a space of learning, knowledge and progression. Educators, especially in design, commonly identify with summative assessment, which is the final grade after the teaching has been concluded. John Biggs describes these assessments with a great analogy.

**“When the chef tastes the sauce it is formative assessment; when the customer tastes, it is summative.”**

(Biggs, Tang, 2007)

In most graphic design environments, educators assess against the student's functional knowledge. Tasks may include functional verbs such as 'apply', 'design', 'create', 'reflect', and 'solve'. While tasks are usually structured in a direct manner for students, some educators have difficulties in their evaluation solely because the assessment task is not properly aligned with the TLA. I am not sure how many times while assessing as a rookie teacher I had difficulties in trying to evaluate projects. Everything seemed so 'fuzzy' with limitless possibilities of the open answer. Through this research I started to understand how important the teaching/learning activities and objectives are to developing an assessment that is clear for the student and teacher. One of the important shifts I have realized is that now I try to establish criteria for grading projects that are always based on the objectives ILO of the course.

*I fully understand that offering a couple of courses in design could not compare to three or four years of study as in University programs but because of the influx of so many private colleges offering diplomas in graphic design in Europe maybe a revised curriculum could have been a start to bring quality design teaching to smaller institutes.*



For example, I state to students in the learning outcomes that evidence of good learning might be demonstrated in a reflective journal, listing examples of what the journal might contain and how it should be applied to a problem based learning environment in practice.

Ehmann (2005) discusses how important it is for teachers to create assessment-focused learning activities that lead towards student engagement in their learning tasks. Graphic design education has been predominately a practice-based, project-based format with few, if any, formal examinations (Ehmann, 2005). This has caused some pedagogical problems with the learning framework and has neglected the importance of a well-designed assessment (Davis, 1997). As a consequence, outcomes have concentrated on the artefact rather than the process of learning. This may have been acceptable in the early days of design as a commercial art but if we are to challenge students to be capable of handling today's complex social and global problems and at the same time help transform practitioners to be excellent communicators then a different approach to learning is needed. Although artefacts are important, the 'final project' must be placed in a realistic context for an increase in student participation and learning (Brew, 1999). A well developed assessment can initiate a deeper approach to learning where students are encouraged to discover new possibilities and reflect on their actions, rather than apply a surface approach to please the teacher (Gibbs, 2005).

*Reflections from the conference paper "Using Assessment to Engage Graphic design Students in their Learning Experience", (Ehmann, 2005). This paper generally discusses how the use of assessment in graphic design pedagogy can help create a link between a students' engagement in their learning activities and the goals of the learning outcomes of the lecturer. Ehmann discusses (Biggs, 2003) and how he uses the principle of constructive alignment to demonstrate how assessment can improve the relationship between evaluation and learning. She also states that in a constructively aligned teaching environment, "...the focus is on matching all aspects of the curriculum with what students do." Ehmann also discusses the importance of the way teachers approach deep learning and that the integration of assessment into learning could bring on a change of interaction into teaching and learning than just a transmission of information.*

*Although at first I did not feel that this paper had much to do with my research, by the end I realized how much I was wrong. While this was one of the first papers I've read on the issue of assessment in graphic design education, I feel that even raising the question of assessment and its implications are important for any educator. One thing that made me reflect on my past curriculum design was how I was trying to push students that enrolled into a deeper learning style, that is I wanted to get the students thinking more about the process in relation the artefact they were creating but I did not think about how assessment could have helped in that goal. By changing the way students are assessed and just the awareness of the criteria could open up some more doors of dialogue between staff and students.*

*Ehmann focused this paper on a case study done in the UK then brought to Australia. The students were given an assessment book given at the start of the semester. The booklet contained project details, learning outcomes, criteria, assessment sheets, deadlines and weighting for each project. The students were also given criteria and models related to the design process. Peer, self and staff assessment was part of the program and students presented reflective exercises. While I have always made it clear to my students what the learning goals were for each project I did not go too much further in the presentation of the learning goals and criteria.*

Sometimes,  
you read  
something and  
it clicks. &%!°  
Why didn't I  
think of that  
before!

18/11/2007  
*As I was going through all this reflection and trying to dig really deep in what I did in my design I came to point where I realized that the actual program that I had put together was not built for the type of students enrolling at the school. Because of the variety in the students' majors most of the students taking a graphic design course were not design majors. I was envisaging a program that could really push the boundaries in design education. Not only would I like to promote some sort of deep learning in the design process, but also to bring to private institutions a well designed curriculum. At the time, it was to focus on building the course base and not necessarily the content. This could have been done through an analysis of teaching activities.*

*If I were to design a curriculum that was scheduled as a one-year program how and why would students coming from North American universities integrate into the program? My new program essentially would work much better for Italian/European students looking for a one-year intensive program to be introduced to the graphic design industry. Looking back now, I really don't see how a student of a graphic design major would want to take this type of a program when they probably would be offered the same thing back at their home uni. Perhaps, if the program was not geared towards a linear process schedule (i.e. 1 semester to 2 semester) and offered highly specialized courses in European graphic design, the industry, practice and research maybe their could have been more interest.*

*Another possibility could be taking into consideration the students majors and that most students enrolled for one semester and they were not design students, the design of a new curriculum could have been just a re-design of how I was teaching the 'digital imaging' course. A re-evaluation and analysis of the current courses could have been all that what needed. There I could have focused my skills in building some research and reflection into the project-based course perhaps through some evaluation methods.*

19/11/2007

BLAM!

*In one of my past reflection exercises, I mentioned that I thought students would be more interested in learning about different ways of communicating in design and that the focus of the learning would be through a "studio-like" working environment. What I was trying to put through was to get the students working through a project using the design studio as the environment. I felt that students needed to create more project briefs and to collaborate together in concept learning sessions where students would present their initial concepts and in a group dissimulate and analyse the problem, sharing ideas. I was trying to model the project just as it could have been done in a design studio. The problem that I see now with this model is that the students' level/interest in graphic design were not ready to work in an environment they were not committed to. This posed another problem of learning. Possibly this structure hindered the individual learning process of graphic design elements such as an image and form and pushed a superficial and forced practice. Using the studio setting for beginner design students also contradicts my other goal of the curriculum development which was to push a deep learning style where students could dig deeper and reflect on their process.*





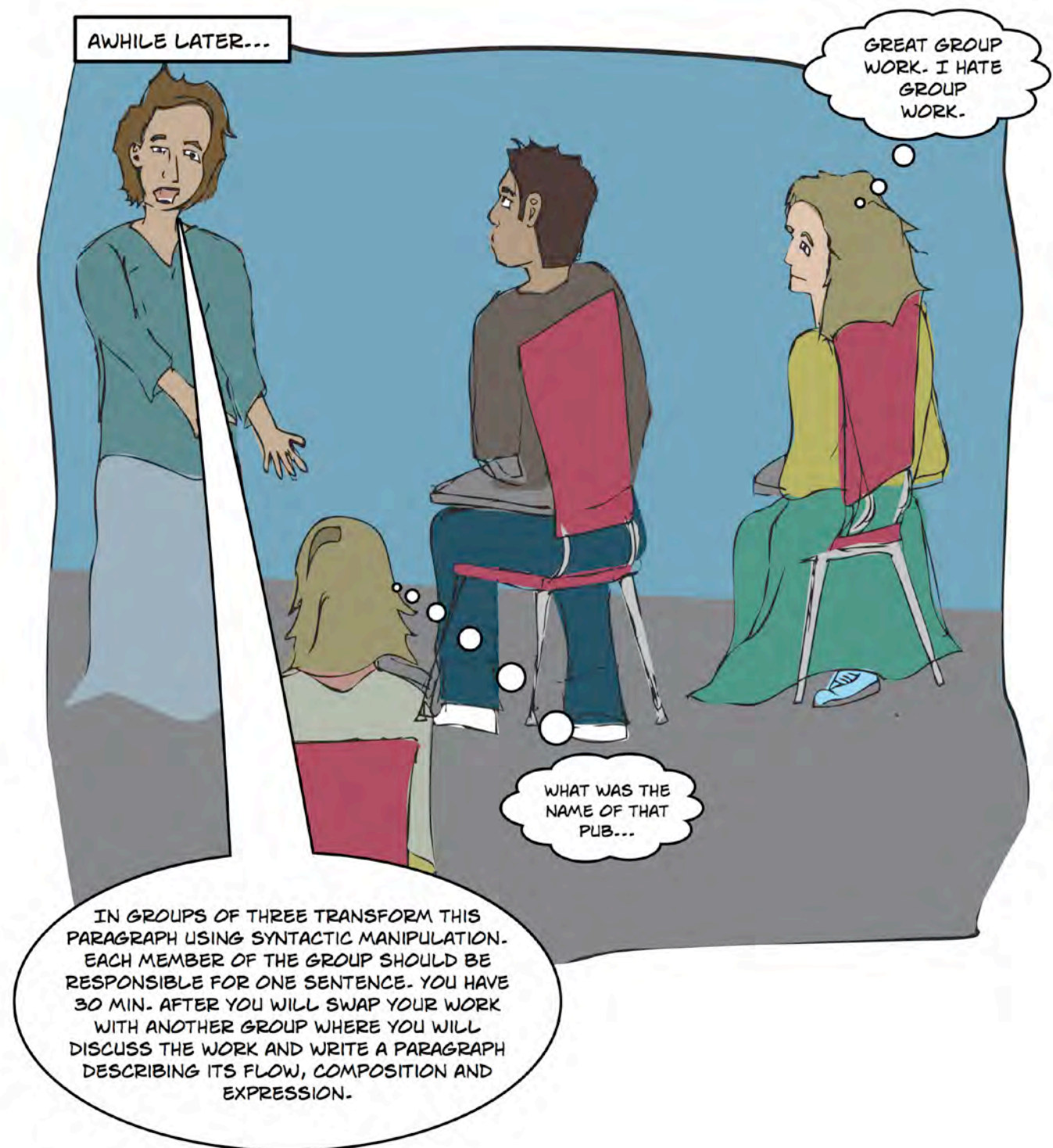
# The GDTs

graphic design teachers

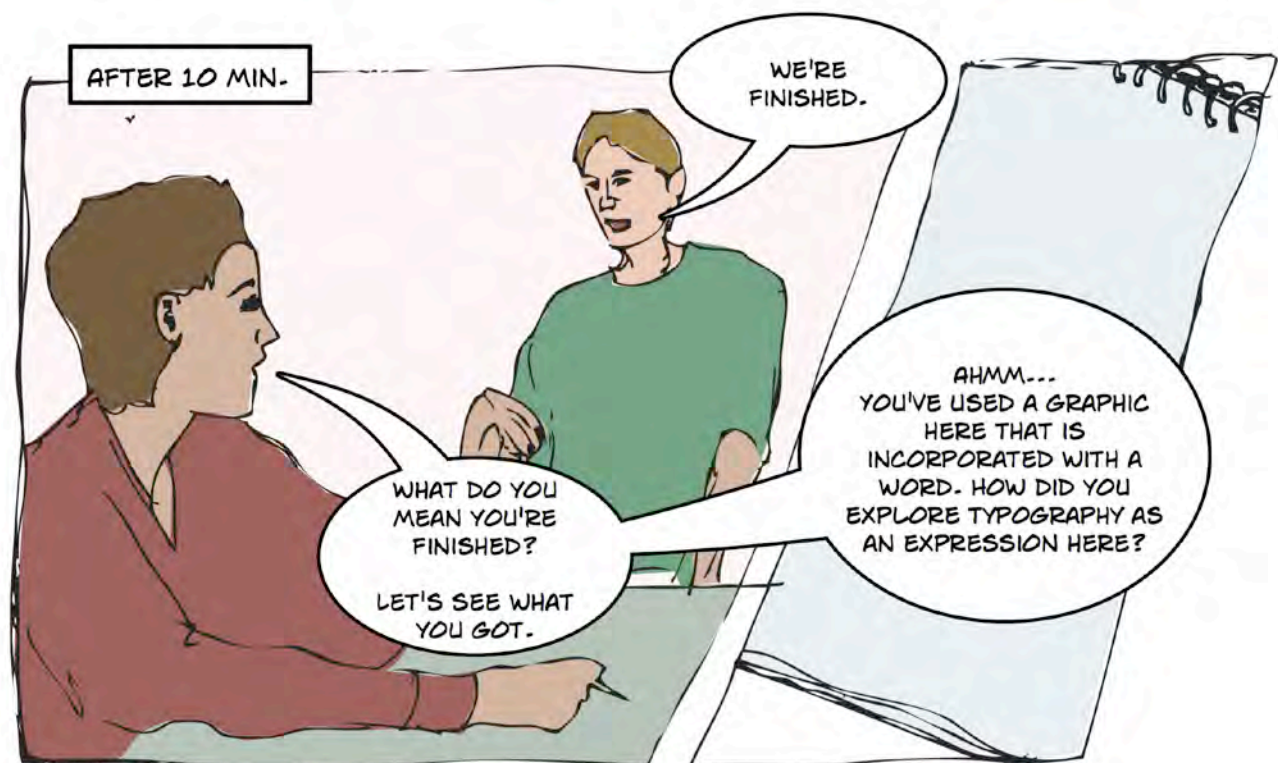
**“What’s going on here?”**

{SECTION 4}





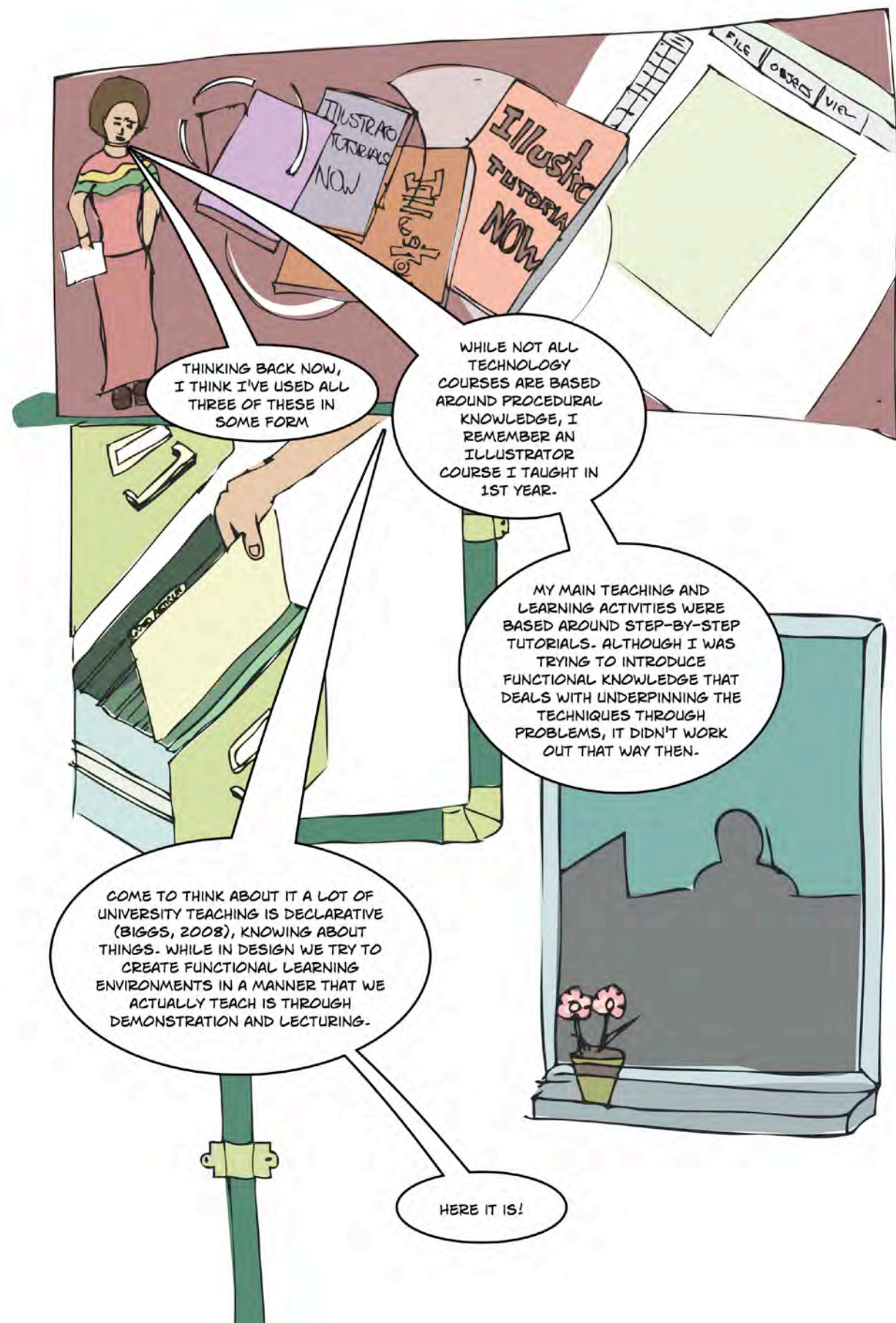




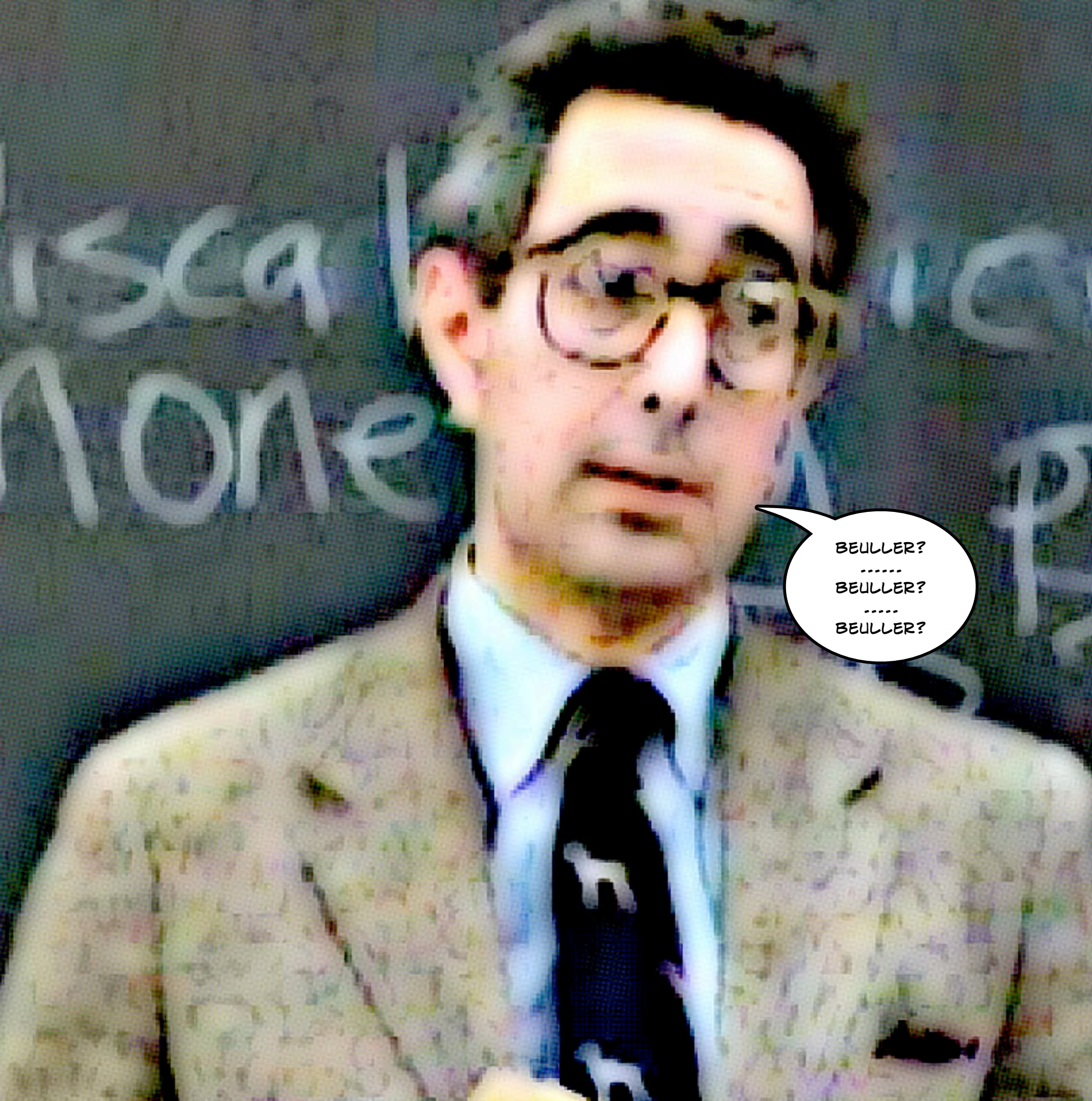












BEULLER?  
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BEULLER?

## Section 5

### Student Perceptions and Learning Outcomes

*During this research I was given the opportunity to co-teach a professional practice course at an Australian university within the communication design department. The course was heavily based on the introduction of reflective practice, and the development of the students' interests within communication design through research. Throughout this time I kept a teaching diary that followed projects and the students' and my own perceptions of the learning environment. I recorded these thoughts after each class in a short debriefing session where I tried to remember comments from the students, their expressions (verbal and body language) and my own feelings at different parts of the class. This process was invaluable as a reflective tool in my research and I developed a deeper sense of how crucial knowledge of students' perceptions in learning can alter learning environments.*



## “I just don’t understand what this course is about.”

### Week 1

For the first class, we separated them into three groups. A week before the class we discussed the T&L activities and though brainstorming and the use of mind maps we explored what would allow the students to collectively discuss communication design opportunities and expand on sectors of practice. One of the objectives was to get the students to start thinking about an industry sector, choose one or two areas, and then create a mind map including a plan on how to achieve their goal. I was fairly nervous and shaky during the first part of the introduction of the course, outlining its objectives and learning outcomes. I mentioned them doing a literature review on the sector and I explained what a literature review was. I thought they understood, but I did not see any results from the next week’s homework. Also in the class there was an emphasis on visual research and that they should start collecting images of design styles, forms, etc., that interested them. After the introduction I started a large brainstorming session where the students and I would think of different areas within communication design. It was very challenging to generate discussion. Sometimes, I was the only one giving examples. I am sure they were nervous and possibly put on the spot with a very different brief than they are used to. Perhaps on reflection, an alternative would have been to introduce the brief by email first. This would have allowed sufficient time for the students to try to understand what it was all about.

*What do students know and think about when they enter your course, hear about the projects and assessments? With more and more diverse students entering graphic design programs it’s difficult for an educator to understand where everyone is coming from.*

*It is essential that the initial description of the course content be carefully designed because it may alter the learning perception and deep engagement of the course objectives.*

*Primarily, the first thing I noticed was the students’ perception of the course. They seemed to be confused with the objectives and assessment. I remember one student stating, “I just don’t understand what this course is about.”*

*I have taught primarily international students, which at some times have different needs than locals. There is usually a language barrier, different customs and previous educational experiences to be taken into account.*

### Week 2

This week was pretty heavy. The students had 5 minutes to present their mood board and map. The plan was to break them up into 3 groups of 8. The first part of the class was to hand-out a critique sheet that was to be used within their small groups so that they could peer/self assess their mood boards/maps in regards to clarity and feasibility. While I was with one group doing their formal presentations, the other two groups were left to discuss their work and ideas through the critique sheet. It was noisy!!! I had a hard time listening to the others present and also I was not too sure of the type of feedback I should have given. I think it is very difficult for a teacher coming from project/studio-based environments where assessment is made by the artefact not the process. I was looking at some pretty weird stuff. Very rough. Most students had no idea what they wanted to do and created mood boards containing a lot of elements. I was trying to get to pick at least two areas that they were interested in but I had a group of superstar ‘wannabe’ designers. Also the huge amount of non-local students definitely had a hard time. Maybe culture has a bit to do with the acceptance of process-oriented projects because the value of knowledge is placed on the social success of the artefact. I was trying to create relationships between the elements that they were showing with their interests and future goals. I come from a corporate design field, so I was telling students to “be clear” and at the same time explore different concepts. This got me into some trouble because students turned the poster into a polished artefact and commercial poster instead of a conceptual and exploratory design where you need to look at it a bit to understand all its parts.

*As a co-teacher, I tried to align the assessments—that dealt with process and discovery skills—with actual problem-based objectives in practice but I know realize that they needed to be much more explicit to avoid confusion for both the teacher and students.*



*The students' perception of course load and assessments can substantially shift the learning environment from deep learning to surface. In fact, students who perceive assessment to encourage memorization and who perceive workloads as high are more likely to adopt a surface approach. (Trigwell & Prosser, 1991)*

*During my time teaching the course I was constantly trying to reflect on what was happening during the lessons by linking my knowledge of pedagogical theories/principles with the teaching and learning activities. This caused great confusion and sometimes helplessness because I was starting to see elements of the course that could have been designed to create deeper learning environments.*

The main point here is that I did not understand the learning outcome of the project, which made any activities difficult and slow. Maybe that is why my classes seem to run much better now because I understand the brief and its learning outcomes. Better late than never.

At the end of class the students were handed a reflective brief. The reflective sheet was there to introduce students to the practice of reflection. They needed to re-evaluate what they had done in the presentation and then by using these key words as prompts analyse, identify gaps, synthesize and visualize their interests. This sheet presented something very new to the students, reflection in action. So, the sheet briefly described what reflection is or needs to be and what the outcome is supposed to be. I think the sheet was written well but the delivery was terrible. This reflection was pushed to the end of class time with little explanation. Basically, the sheet did not help. I think it is really difficult to teach reflection. It would have been great to have one full class on introducing it. There could have been through readings and discussion, simpler in-class assignments, etc.

**...the students had to really work out whatever they could on their own**

*Perhaps, an initial step would be for teachers to reflect on what they see, hear and feel from the first day. This reflective space may help engage the process of student-centred learning where the goal of the teacher is to help change the way students learn the subject matter and not concentrate on transmitting information.*

At one point in my research I had to explain to other Master and PhD students the definition of reflection. I had such a difficult time with the explanation that I realised for the course there needed to be another T&L activity to introduce reflection to the 3rd years students.

“ Sample from the reflection exercise: The process of re-evaluation is called Reflection. Reflection is an activity designers undertake all the time. The process of reflection is to place ourselves outside of our work and re-look at ourselves. This perspective can offer different insights. It can help work out what happened, what is wrong, and what could be done differently. It is a way to produce new knowledge and the plan the next action. ”

I explained something like this in my strategies class as well, but some questions came up like after you have reflected how can you translate what you have done? They asked, “How do you visualise?” I told them that it took awhile for me and something just clicked between writing, re-writing, reading and sketching. Now, if that is how I explain this to postgraduates, imagine the undergrads. I am not too sure how the other lecturers did it, because they have more experience in this, but my feelings are that all of us need a better-structured approach when illustrating the bridge between reflecting and visualisation. While I do not think this could ever be something prescribed, perhaps well thought of keywords and questions can help students' obtain that clarity or “click” in reflection.

*We were asking for some very abstract and institutionally risky ideas in a context that was not normally supported by practice. Although reflective practice as a definition was understood by most visiting practitioners, an explanation on how they use the method to fuel their work was unattainable.*

*Many students in my experience like to see their assessments based on artefacts that coincide with their professional careers. If they do not see this relationship, there is a greater chance that the student will apply just enough knowledge to 'get through the course'.*



## Week 4

### Students confused to the max!

The class was becoming really difficult. Most students did the reflection sheet and half of them actually brought in a 1st rough of their poster. I was disappointed on how they were engaging with the brief. I tried to give examples of my research and how I was reflecting and visualizing, etc. But it still seemed that they do not understand. They were really confused on what the objectives were, what was the point, what they would learn and how it fit with practice. Also there was talk on the aesthetic look of the poster. Was it to be exploratory and communicate process or refined and clear? In the middle of both? Maybe. The first thing I did was go around to each of the three groups and see if they had any questions regarding the brief. As I mentioned before, they had many questions. While I was with one group, the others were to think about some directed questions that asked them to analyse their posters and think about how it relates to practice. After, I led the entire group to pin-up and discuss their posters. I followed up with a group discussion on some broader questions like, what is communication design? And where do they see it heading? Big questions. Most of the time, I was talking to myself. This is expected but maybe not as much as I thought.

*"Students do not experience learning, they experience the learning of something. Teachers do not experience teaching, they experience the teaching of something."*

*(Marton and Booth, 1997)*

*It is hard to find a balance in course design to 'fit' with this diversity but I feel it is essential that teachers find alternative teaching and learning activities that may help create flexibility in the learning environment.*

*It seems that many new teachers from my experience feel that design students are 'better students' if they get excited about the projects in a superficial manner rather than being given a comprehensive explanation of the purpose of the artefact and how its design fits within a more global communication solution. This delivery may only aid in the development of more students adopting a surface approach in their learning environment*

## Week 5

### Second Roughs (sick)

I was sick so the other teachers took over my students. The problem was that one teacher was stressing a more exploratory approach the project while I had been approaching the brief as the poster being a clear communicative design. I think this confusion came from the actual writing of the brief. The assessment criteria were unclear and were interpreted differently by all of us. Imagine the students! One teacher had told me that a handful of my students were still confused and did not know where to take the project. Many of the international students did not even have communication design interests! And while some of them could have used this time to build up their research on areas like commercial wedding photography, I do not know really how it all relates. I asked a student why were in communication design if they really wanted to work in commercial photography?

Also it seems that not only were the students having a hard time with the difficulty on focusing on process oriented outcomes but so was I. This had been really my first "process" course and after dealing with beautifully finished artefacts for so many years, it took awhile for my brain and eyes to adjust. I think that's why it was difficult for me to give comments on some of the work. The assessment criteria was discussed and modified to help but I was looking for away to move the student so that there was not only an understandable message/content but also a professionally designed piece (i.e. They are paying attention to design details and basic elements)

*The confusion regarding the assessment projects only intensified in the final weeks and in my opinion caused many students to 'just try and pass'.*

*Too often I have seen in graphic design classes that the teacher focuses on the artefact students will design rather than the emphasis and clear explanation of the intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities and assessment structure.*



## Week 6

### One on one Consultations

I like the idea of the consultations because it creates some time to focus directly on students' work and where they are heading with the project. On the other end, it breaks up the momentum of the course environment and invariably, some students think of it as a holiday, as they did this time. Half of the students showed up to their allotted time slot. I can understand that some students find the consultations scary because it required them to be honest about their work and also because they might feel intimidated by the direct feedback. I am thinking now that scheduled one-on-one consults can be avoided completely by structuring the class into small groups where the other students, through direct questioning, could give helpful input with guidance of a facilitator. Better yet, would be to get some designers from studios in there to critique them. This of course opens up a whole bunch of problems that became evident when the practitioners came to talk with the students at their poster exhibition.

## Week 7

### More Consultations

# 1 on 1 consultations student perception= Holiday.

*In graphic design, teachers see a variety of student perceptions right from the first day of the course. In study-abroad institutions, private college and public universities, I have seen design students enrolled because they genuinely want to explore the field to parental pressure and for permanent residency visas. Why do some schools accept everyone? And should there be more a portfolio review than just a portfolio? This is why graphic design degrees are not perceived as part of the academic field.*

*Research indicates that the students' perception is built from their prior experience of learning, prior understanding of the nature of the subject matter being studied and variations in learning environments.*

## Week 8

The final posters were organised into three sections (experimental, corporate and social/sustainable) Practitioners came in and selected five posters each which they wanted to discuss with the students. In theory, this was a good idea but when it actually happened, not so much. Even though the practitioners were briefed on the project and we were there to guide the conversation, I believe that the designers did not have a full grasp on what the project was really about. This made the conversation difficult. Other than the students not having nearly enough presentation skills, the designers had a difficult time responding to a brief that was process focused and exploratory. The students were put on the spot by the selection technique and the other students who were not chosen seemed to be bored just listening to the Q&A. To some extent we were all hoping that the practitioners would cite examples of how they use design research in their work. This was hard to do given they might not have been aware of the types of methods they were using in the studio and if so how to articulate this to students in relation to their posters. Students gave explanations of how they did not know what area of communication design they were interested in and did not really understand the brief. This of course created some awkward silences, which I tried to fill up by asking the student to at least explain why they placed certain elements where, even to the basics of type choice and hierarchy. Not good. If designers were to be involved in the design research aspect of the course then it seems it was very important to have them there throughout the entire process. This of course could not have been done in this course because of lack of funding and other external factors that I am not aware of yet.

Looking back I believe there could have been some modifications to the critique structure and project that could have changed the results of the practitioner critique and presentation. To aid the practitioners with the possibility of a better dialogue with the students, the practitioners could have been handed a more detailed brief of the objectives of the project and how it was to be assessed. I think a clearer assessment guide could have also been given to the students, which could explicitly link core objectives with key assessment criteria. This could have eliminated the continuous confusion regarding how the artefact related to practice. Also the critique by the practitioners could have been handled differently. As stated previously, during the presentations many students were not involved due to time constraints. This could have been resolved by practitioners, assisted by the teachers, holding a workshop concerning research methods used in practice and professional practice preparation. It is understandable that some practitioners who came to the presentation did not have much teaching experience and/or time, thus the assisted facilitation by the teachers needed to be clearly organised. Through reflection, I discovered and acknowledged the importance of having clear objectives and linked assessment tasks for both the teacher and the student. In this case it would have alleviated much of the confusion and would have allowed for a better design of the teaching and learning activities including the presentation with the practitioners. In his research educator John Biggs (2003) states that it is essential that students understand the rational behind assessment tasks and learning activities to be able to pursue deeper knowledge of the course objectives. I would agree.



## Week 9

This week was the review of the exhibition, poster project and a mini lecture on how to move it towards the next project, the e-portfolio.

Today, I went over the exhibition and voiced my concerns on their presentations skills, what they could do to improve them and why it is important. I gave the students a chance to also voice their own concerns on not only the logistics of the exhibition but also how they felt it pertained to the learning objective which was to gain insight of design research in the industry and the valuable learning tools gained by a process orientated project. Quite surprisingly they had similar concerns on how the exhibition was facilitated. I then discussed how the poster project should extend to the next e-portfolio project. I explained that their chosen interest in communication design should be used as a layer when thinking about the portfolio's structure, navigation, labelling, ect. It seemed that they understood by the head nods and were willing to push harder in their concept development and explore the possibilities of presentation. This was until...

*Biggs describes this as the 'Presage-Process-Product model where the presage are the characteristics of the student (previous experiences, current understanding) and the course and departmental learning context which covers the course design, teaching methods and assessment. The process is the students' perception of the context (good teaching and clear goals) and the students' approach to learning while the final step 'product' describes the students learning outcomes (what they learn). (Biggs, 1978; Prosser et al., 1994a).*

*Educators Trigwell and Prosser stated that a deep approach to learning is often found to be related to the perception that there is a choice in how the subject is to be learned, the teaching is of high quality, that is well designed teaching and learning activities and that there are clear goals and standards for what is to be learned. (Prosser et al., 1996)*

*In many instances, students whom have had better learning experiences and prior understanding of the subject matter often approach learning deeply and their learning outcomes are high. (Biggs, 2003)*

## Week 10

### e-portfolio roughs

Unfortunately when one teacher and the other lecturer did a lecture on portfolios the idea of process and exploration went out the window. This was because the samples shown to students were all very slick, corporate, clean examples. This is fine for those corporate designers in the class but did not really leave much room for the rest. It also pushed the other students to take a risk-free approach to their design even though it did not reflect their interests. Ahhhh! Back tracking again. It seems there has been a lot of that from the beginning of this course. Brief confusing. Brief reworded and agreed upon. Objectives and outcomes presented. Students adopt surface approach because of miscommunication. Lecturers blaming students again. End result: half of students barely understanding what it was all about!

## Week 11

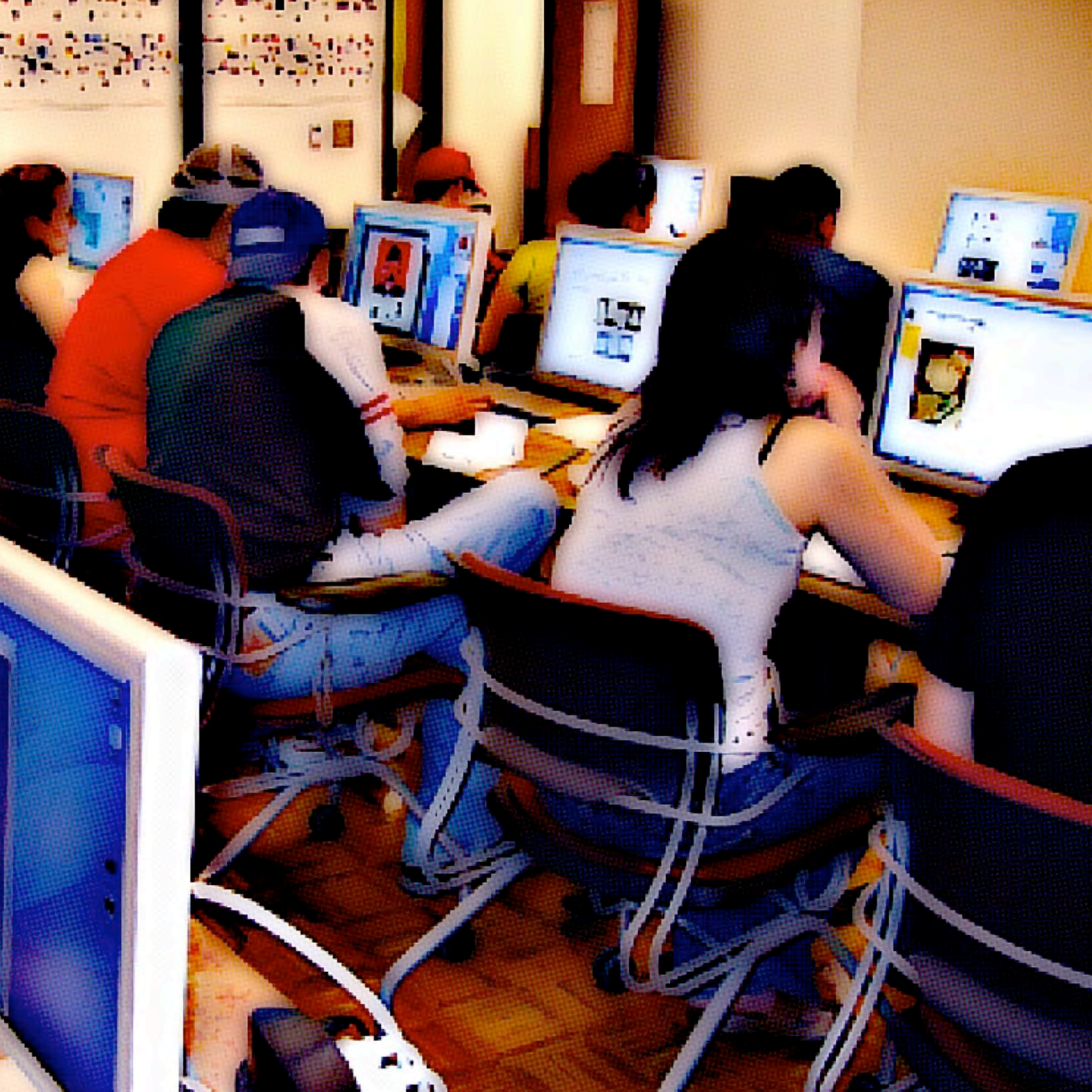
### E-portfolio presentation and final consults

### Summary

This course was developed to engage 3<sup>rd</sup> year communication design students to develop their skills in design research especially reflection in action and research through design. The key element was the use of reflection in the developmental process of their artefacts and to explore how this method can be used to solve complex communication problems in practice. The diary assisted my understanding of how

the awareness of student perceptions and the proper design of intended learning outcomes are an important factor in the development of good teaching and learning. It created a vehicle to reflect, analyse, discover and apply changes in my teaching and bridge my developing knowledge of pedagogical principles with the teaching and learning environment of the course.





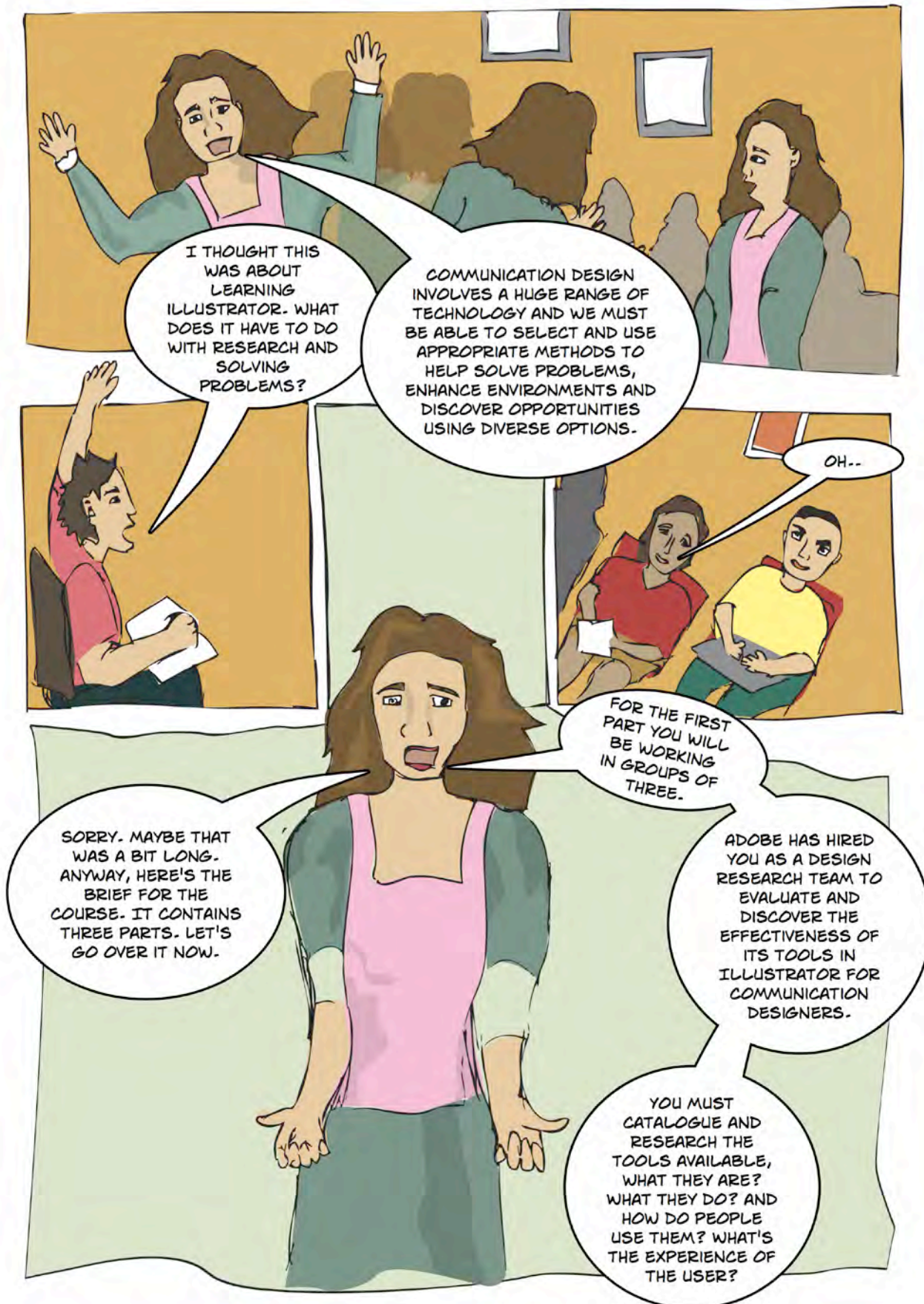
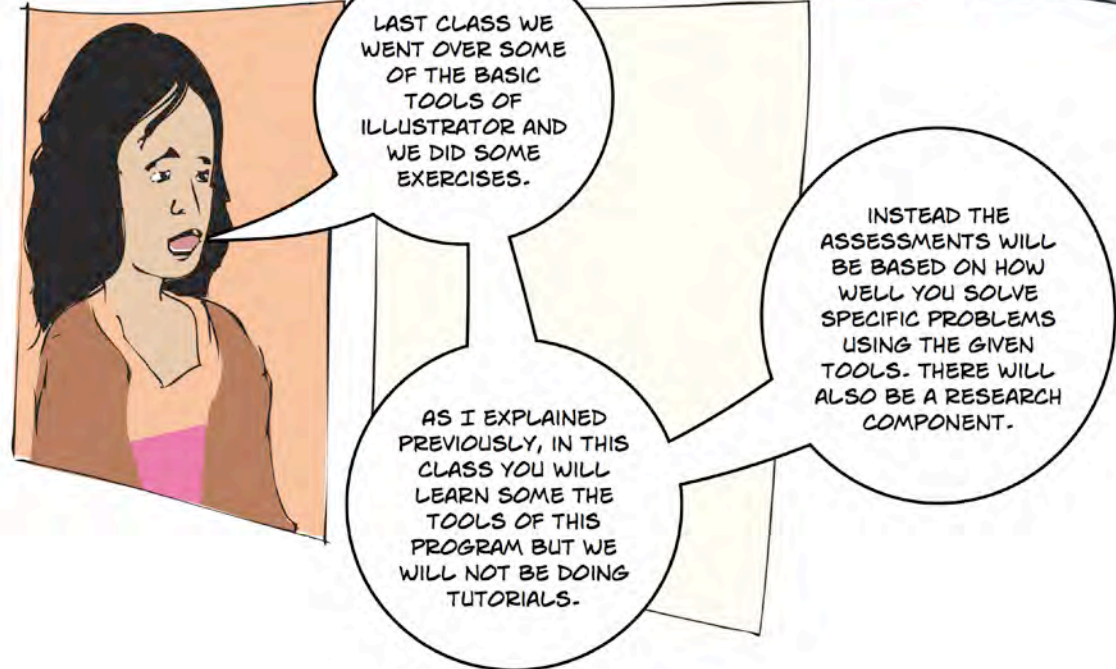
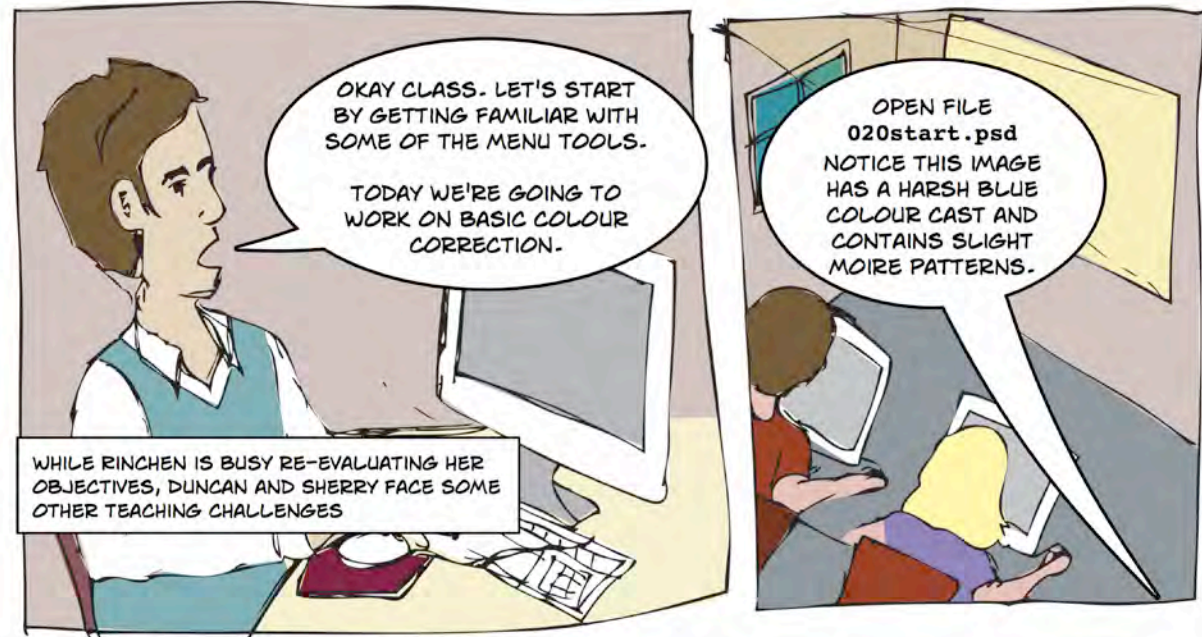
# The GDTs

graphic design teachers

**“I have to teach Photoshop again?”**

{SECTION 6}









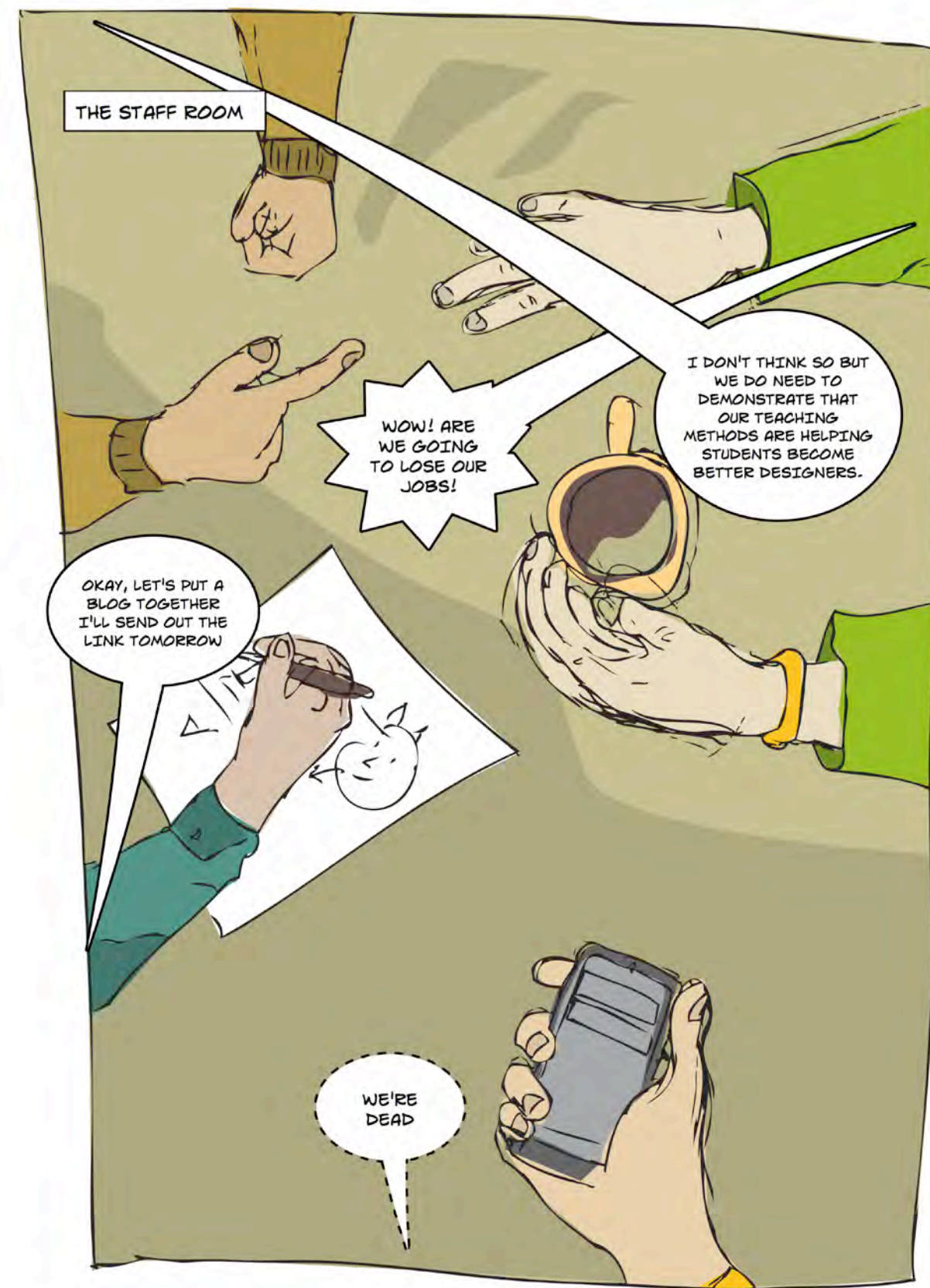




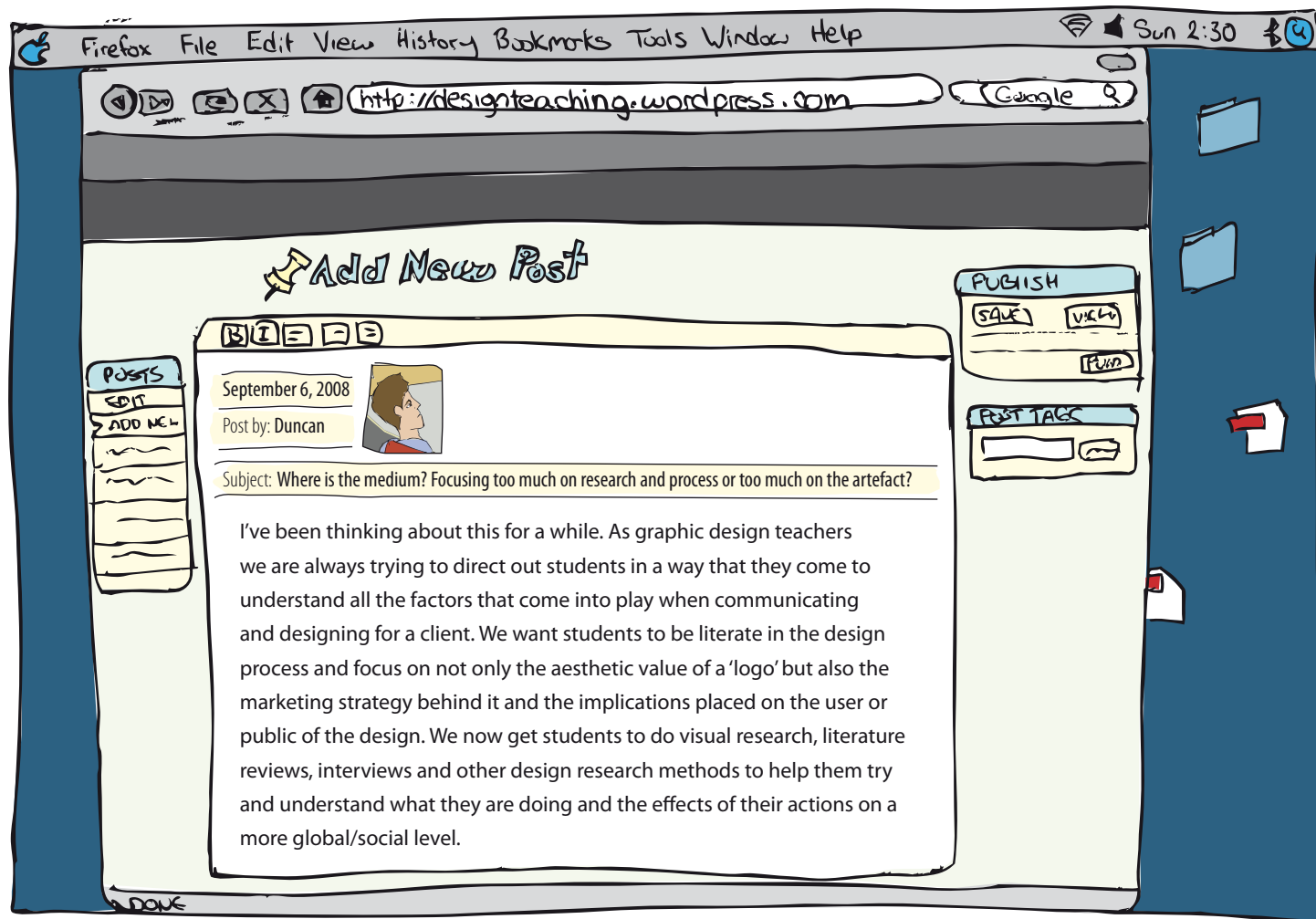












## 📌 Add New Post

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“ But when is it enough? We all know that not all the students will work as practicing designers and, we also know that graphic design practice has opened up so many more opportunities as communication design experts that the practice has shifted to a new level.

The institutions want to capitalize on all students promoting that they could become Mac operators to design researchers and visualisation experts to art directors. I could pick out at least five different streams of students that we have now. How can we teach everything to all? ”

September 7, 2008

Reply by: Rinchen



Subject: Where is the medium? Focusing too much on research and process or too much on the artefact?

I know what you mean. When I went to school, it was all about form, line, space, etc. I was schooled in the craft of graphic design and I learned about the 'business' side through experience working. I understand the value of research for graphic design but sometimes I feel that it's too abstract from practice. Maybe we need to speak to other teachers?



## Section 7

### The Interviews

Interviews were selected as one of my research methods because I felt I needed first-hand information on pedagogy from a variety of teachers and not just that of my supervisors and myself. At that time, my research question was different; it discussed how design research methods and pedagogical principles could be used in graphic design education to help create good learning and teaching environments. The comic was being used to support and facilitate my current understanding of pedagogy and reflective practice within graphic design education. Although literature reviews helped inform my research question, there still was a need for a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' perceptions and conceptions of pedagogical theory and principles, especially in the private study-abroad sector.



While the original list of new participants contained a well-selected mix of teachers with varying kinds of experience, it soon turned to a massive process with prominent educators from three continents participating. When I proposed this research method during my candidature a major consensus from my colleagues and some advisors was that I possibly did not need to pursue them because I was asking questions that did not necessarily align with my research question. Against advice, I undertook the interviews with a scaled down list to three teachers. The result of the interviews allowed for some solidification of my argument and research question.

During the interviews, I prompted discussions through a set of interview questions that were written with a heavy academic tone using a lexicon of pedagogy that was unfamiliar to some teachers. Within these interviews I also presented a chapter from the comic series to try and facilitate the questions surrounding pedagogy, research and reflection. In the end, the majority of teachers responded more to the comic than to the direct questioning.

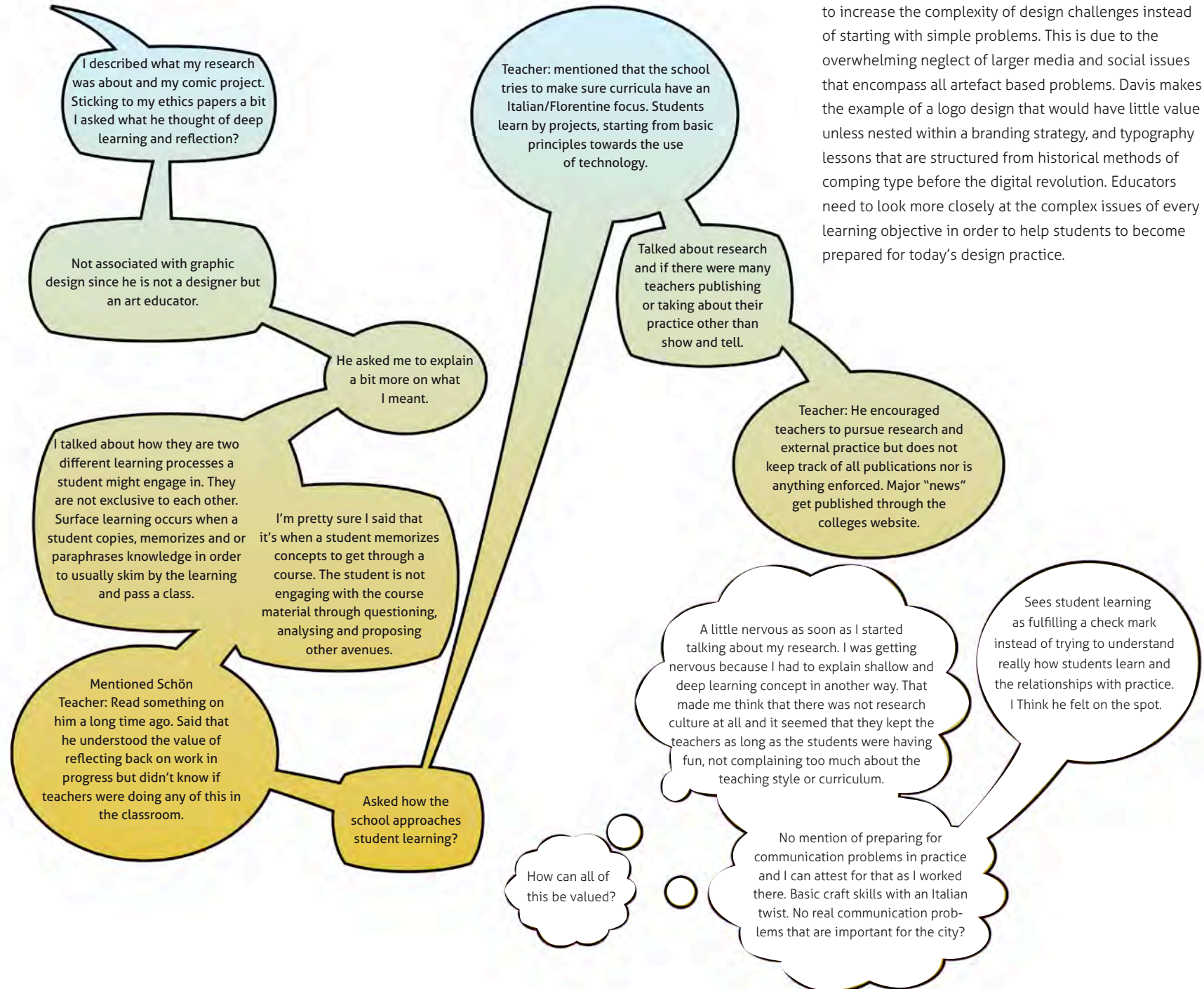
The comic provided a safe and visual environment that depicted scenarios they could relate to during teaching. After careful reflection, I discovered that the comic may be a method of translating the pedagogical lexicon to new and casual graphic design teachers and that graphic literacy can help facilitate pedagogical awareness in graphic design education.



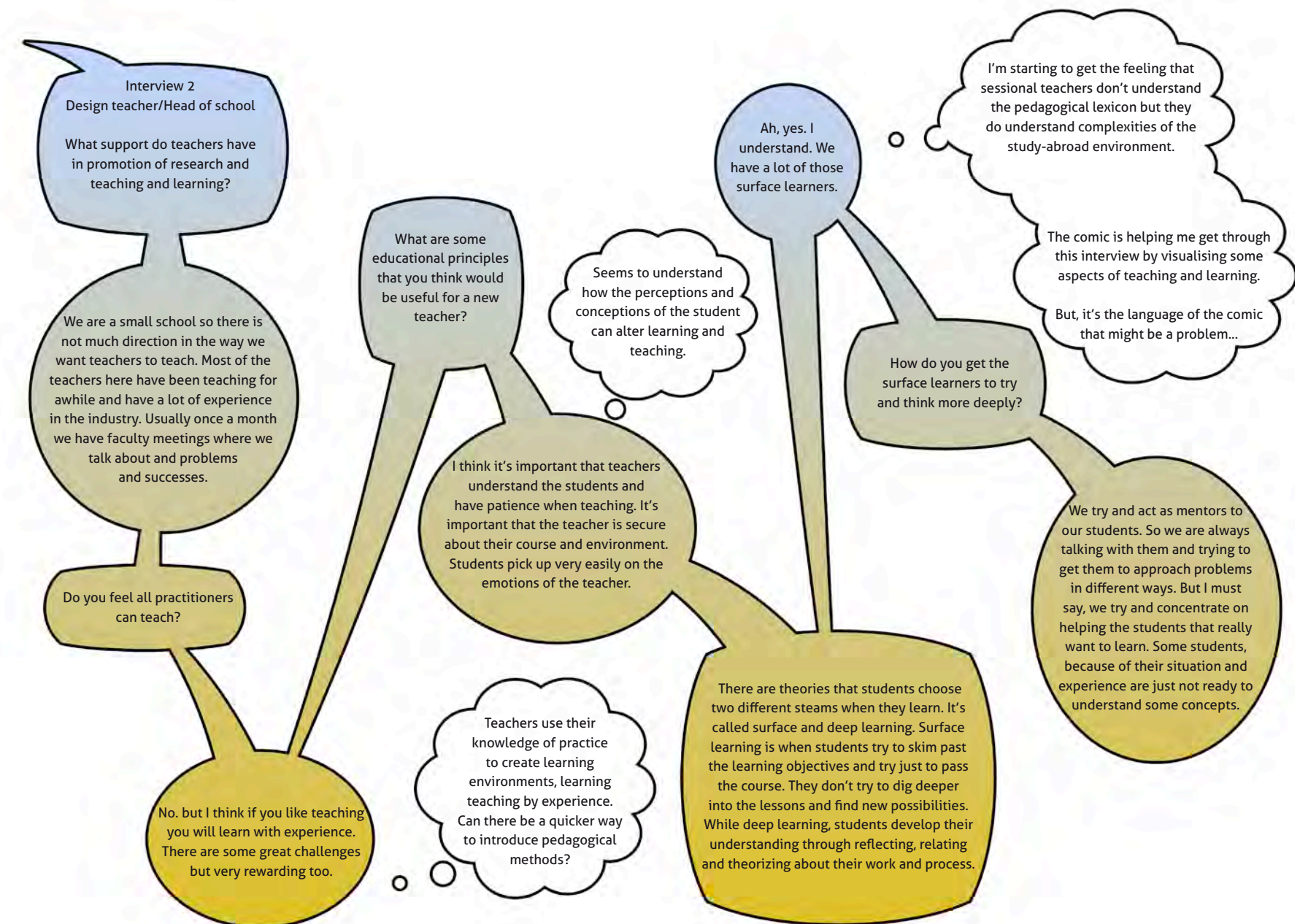
# Interview \*

excerpts & reflections

✎ Educator Meredith Davis in a recent article (2007) stresses how important it is for educators to increase the complexity of design challenges instead of starting with simple problems. This is due to the overwhelming neglect of larger media and social issues that encompass all artefact based problems. Davis makes the example of a logo design that would have little value unless nested within a branding strategy, and typography lessons that are structured from historical methods of comping type before the digital revolution. Educators need to look more closely at the complex issues of every learning objective in order to help students to become prepared for today's design practice.



# ...we concentrate on helping the students that really want to learn.

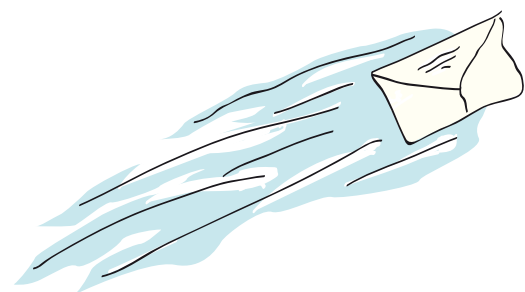




## Section 7 Interview Follow-up



As a follow-up to my interviews I asked various design teachers and directors of some private colleges and universities in Europe to comment on my original interview questions. I wanted to discover their thoughts and reactions to the questions without the pressures of the interview context. The responses received established a greater understanding of the operation of study-abroad institutions but more importantly that there is a need to communicate pedagogical principles and theories to sessional teachers.



I started to direct my email towards the private sector. These colleges and art/design institutes generally use casual staff for most of the learning experiences. This is mainly due to government contract restrictions and economic forces. In fact, it is not uncommon to see newly practicing designers direct entire design departments. Many private design colleges in Florence, for example, are structured around the idea of short-term learning. Students arrive at the institute for a semester or two to 'experience' the new environment and gain credit points for their degree back home. Through a quick review of some design colleges in Europe, most design instruction that is given in the English language are often semester (term) learning experiences.

Due to the influx of students travelling to study-abroad colleges, institutions rely on practitioners to 'fill-in' as teachers at a moments notice. This sometimes causes the teaching and learning environment to shift regardless of institutional policies on good teaching environments.

While teaching at a college in Florence, I heard one teacher comment that "...as long as the students are happy, there's no problem." Through reflection, this comment demonstrates a sign of poor teaching objectives that are unfortunately commonly found in study-abroad institutions.



This could be because of the perception that student happiness correlates to good student learning and an 'easy' teaching experience. It can also be attributed to the marketing of study-abroad institutions as learning opportunities for students whose primary objective is travel and diverse cultural experiences. Thus, some sessional teachers feel that structuring their teaching and learning activities towards 'having fun' is the best option regardless of the course objectives because it alleviates pressure to develop good learning environments for just their few hours of teaching. In the end, this lowers the quality of graphic design study-abroad education and student knowledge of practice.

## and then I realised something...

With large numbers of casual teachers in study-abroad programs, institutions need to create teaching and learning support systems to help facilitate better learning environments. In a recent response, one director of a private college stated that pedagogical approaches are not discussed amongst staff nor is there any teaching support at the institution because of the short learning time for the students, How then can casual teachers be introduced to pedagogy in an explicit manner that is essential for helping facilitate good learning in design education?

“ approaches are not discussed amongst staff nor is there any teaching support at the institution

Unfortunately, through experience as a casual teacher within the private sector, few external organizations aid in any pedagogical support. Various graphic associations do provide information on teaching

through seminars, blogs and journal articles but I believe there could be a greater effort in this communication towards casual educators who begin their teaching experience from practice environments and are not within any research culture. Commonly, practitioners learn how to teach by using their knowledge of practice to help create learning environments, developing pedagogical methods along their career. This knowledge gap could be lessened through the communication of pedagogical principles that can help create a foundation to their teaching practice.

Information from graphic associations and educational theorists are often discussed and disseminated using a language that is not familiar with new/casual teachers and often the onus is on the teacher to discover and reflect on the issue. Although there are many graphic design university environments where a pedagogical culture is applicably enforced, there are still thousands of design students that 'graduate' each semester from study-abroad institutions where teaching and learning principles are unfortunately not considered.

In my idealist opinion, a pedagogical foundation of learning and teaching within graphic design education may be set as universal information for all institutions. My proposal is that graphic literacy can be used to create a pedagogical foundation for casual design teachers in both the private and public sector.







**I BELIEVE  
IT COULD BE TIME  
TO TAKE OUR SKILLS  
AS EXCELLENT VISUAL  
COMMUNICATORS  
AND USE THEM TO HELP  
THE DESIGN EDUCATION SYSTEM.**

Typically pedagogical texts are written in language that is not commonly used in design education. This makes the knowledge quite inaccessible to many new teachers.

Although graphic design has had difficulties in translating the pedagogical lexicon to its context, it could use its expertise in the visual language to help create a broader understanding of teaching and learning theories and principles for itself and others.

The very visual communication skills that we teach could be a more effective way to communicate to educators the necessary pedagogical theory that is to be used in the classroom.



**GRAPHIC LITERACY COULD BE THE ANSWER.**

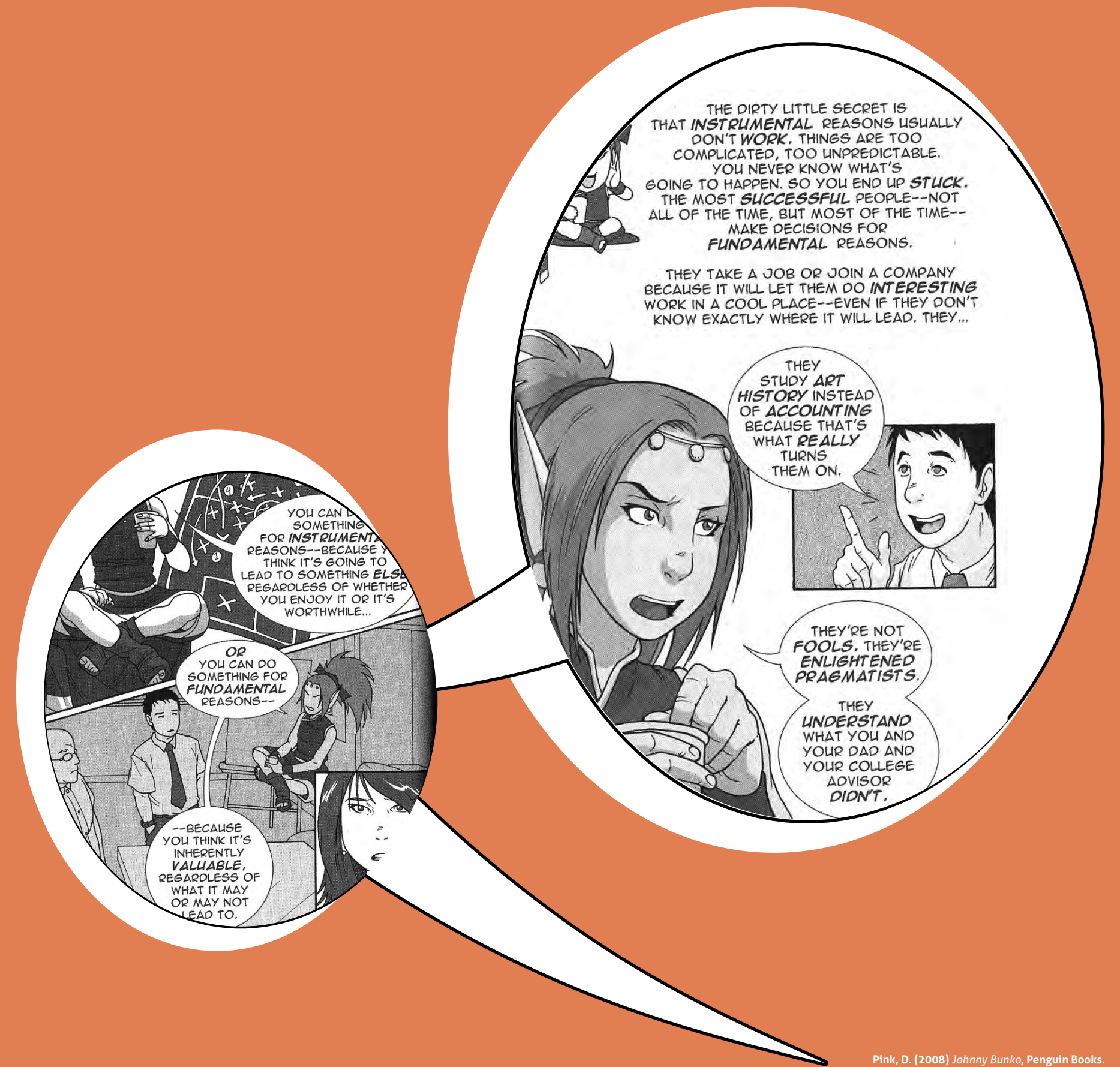


## Section 8

### The role of graphic literacy in education

Recent studies have found that, the use of visuals in teaching can result in a greater degree of learning (Stokes, 2001). Stokes also states that “visualisation helps make sense of the data that may have seemed previously unintelligible.” Many disciplines, especially the social sciences have found that the use of the graphic language to communicate complex information is a method that increases the facilitation of learning. Even business have seen the value of the graphic language. Johnny Bunko (Pink, 2008) is a bestselling business and career guide delivered in Manga format. Its author Daniel Pink, describes the format as quickly accessible and a method of visual literacy that captures the attention of the audience immediately at the same time communicating strategic theories otherwise lost by its complex formation.

“visualisation helps make sense of the data that may have seemed previously unintelligible.”





Comic books and graphic novels have been increasingly incorporated into teaching and learning materials because they promote multi-modal literacy (text and image) (Jacobs, 2008). Scott McCloud's seminal text, *Understanding Comics* is a required reading in some design foundation courses. Visual literacy encourages a critical engagement of the text and creates a highly cognitive learning environment (Yannicopoulou, 2004). Comics have moved from being marginal and labelled as detrimental to learning towards a tool that encourages deep learning. Scott McCloud (1994), states that cartoons resemble our non-visual self-awareness, we inherently identify with them, whereas we react to a more realistically drawn character as being apart, other from ourselves. He also describes that cartoons are conceptually closer to words than realistic portrayals are, and therefore words and cartoons are closer to a 'unified language'.

Using comics and graphic literacy as a way to engage educators in an awareness of pedagogical principles may be a logical step in the development of graphic design education. The comic may allow for the flexibility needed in the hypothesizing of various teaching and learning scenarios that tie in directly with key pedagogical literature. Through the visual sequencing, and development of narratives they also create a familiarity with educators and encourage deep teaching approaches (Biggs, 2003).

Gene Yang's (2008) online guide *Comics in Education* embodies a thinking that is typical of many educators who advocate the use of comics. Yang claims that the educational strength of comics is that they are motivating, visual, permanent, intermediary and popular. However some educators feel that the use of comics as merely a stepping-stone to the acquisition of other higher skills is limited (Jacobs, 2003).

There is an increasing role for educators to prepare visually literate learners. Contemporary culture is dependent on the visual but more importantly; students need to have the capacity to communicate instantly and universally (Metros, 2008). With culture being constantly enriched through the visual language including social networks, the web, photos, video and motion graphics, more institutions are re-evaluating their curricula to include visual literacy requirements. The idea here is that students learn to deal intelligently with graphic and visual literacy in a manner that they are able to use them as a parallel method of communication.



McCloud, S. (1997) *Understanding Comics*, Harper Press.

Many students lack a vocabulary of vision that supports them to communicate non-verbally and to express themselves visually. While in the faculty of communication design, we pride ourselves in the development and nurturing of this very ability, we do not share it with others. Perhaps visual communicators can take their knowledge and help other disciplines to communicate more clearly. Design students have the ability to analyze, interpret, create and compose visual images using strong communication methods that are necessary today.

#### But why visualize?

Hicks and Essinger's (1991) research into cognitive science suggests that users prefer visual displays of information rather than verbal descriptions. Studies also reveal that "visualisation" reduces the cognitive load by simplifying meaning and providing clarity to complex concepts. Although here it is important to note that the ability to "visualize" and understand graphic/visual images is not a matter of solely simplification or "dulling" of a highly cognitive concept in order for an easier translation. Being graphically literate creates new paths for students to design multi-modal communications, which would be otherwise missing, in many learning situations.

Comics and graphic novels provide a framework for the facilitation of multi-modal literacy which can be used as a tool in teaching to engage students and teachers with the skills necessary to understand systems of knowledge (Jacobs, 2003). They also provide teachers with an environment to explore various teaching methods, principles, theories and ideas through a narrative re-enactment of their own teaching experiences. Not only can they be used as a tool to engage educators in using a literacy common to their practice but also may be used as a reflective space where teachers can better understand their own perceptions and conceptions of the learning environment.

graphic literacy could be the answer.

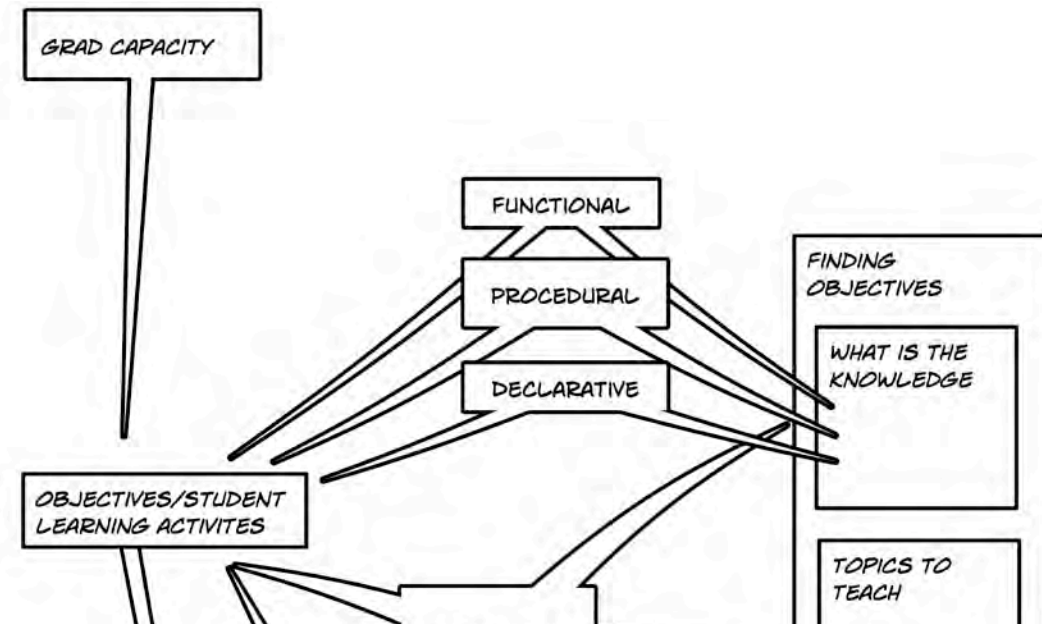
KA-BLAM!

POW!

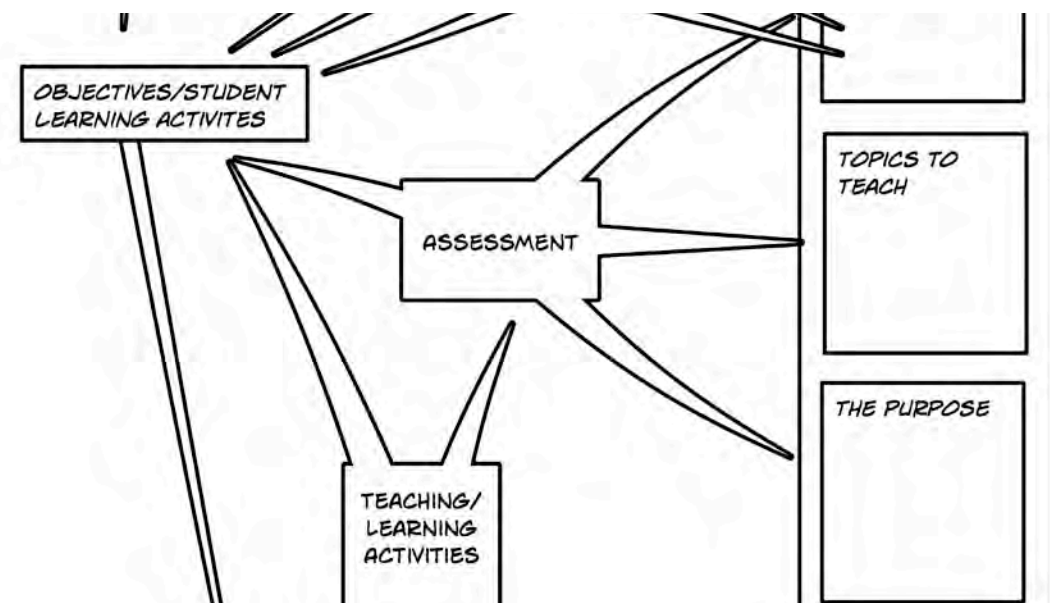


## Section 9 What did I learn? (by doing this research)

I began his research reflecting on the impact that teaching and learning theories have on graphic design education. Through exercises, interviews, reading and designing I have explored how graphic literacy can help communicate the pedagogical lexicon to sessional graphic design teachers. In response to this research my questions and titles have shifted, resulting in a deeper inquiry of facilitation methods of educational principles and theories. As a result, the changes to my research question are important aspects of the entire project. These changes demonstrate an acquisition and development of knowledge that has been developed towards the core argument.



**Original research title and question:**  
**Information for the graphic design educator:**  
**The integration of research in undergraduate (honours) curricula** How can design research be integrated into undergraduate graphic design education?



This research question was developed from my past experiences in graphic design teaching and my perceptions and conceptions of the learning and teaching environment. Through review and reflection, I recognized that I had a superficial view of pedagogy and its lexicon. Through a literature review (method 1), I developed an understanding of how different aspects of design research may aid in the learning environment of graphic design education. I still required a more complete analysis and understanding of the forces (institutional, perceptions and conceptions) at play.

The first exercise I undertook to develop this understanding was one of deep reflection (method 2) discussed in Section 3. Via my blog <http://designteaching.wordpress.com> I began writing about all the conceptions and perceptions of my past teaching experiences in graphic design. The writing and reflection coupled with a literature review of pedagogical principles and theory led to a major shift in my thinking; widening my knowledge of relevant pedagogical principles.

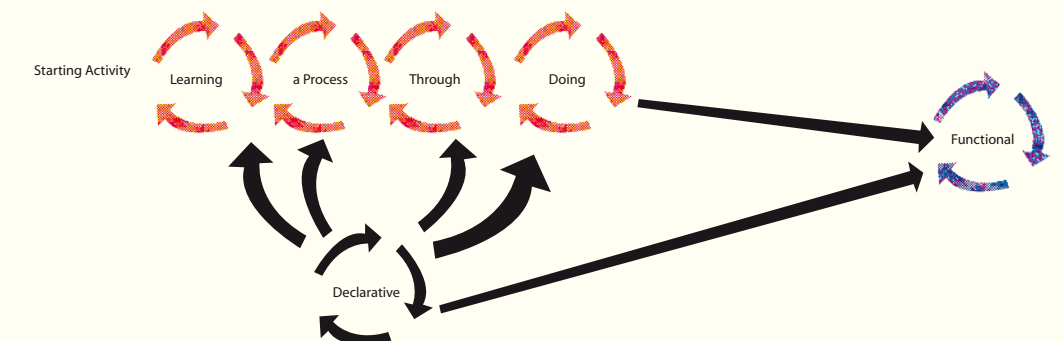
This research initiated my primarily focus towards deep learning environments and reflective practice.

“More importantly, I reflected on my perceptions and conceptions of my past teaching and how my teaching and learning activities may have led towards surface and deep learning outcomes.”

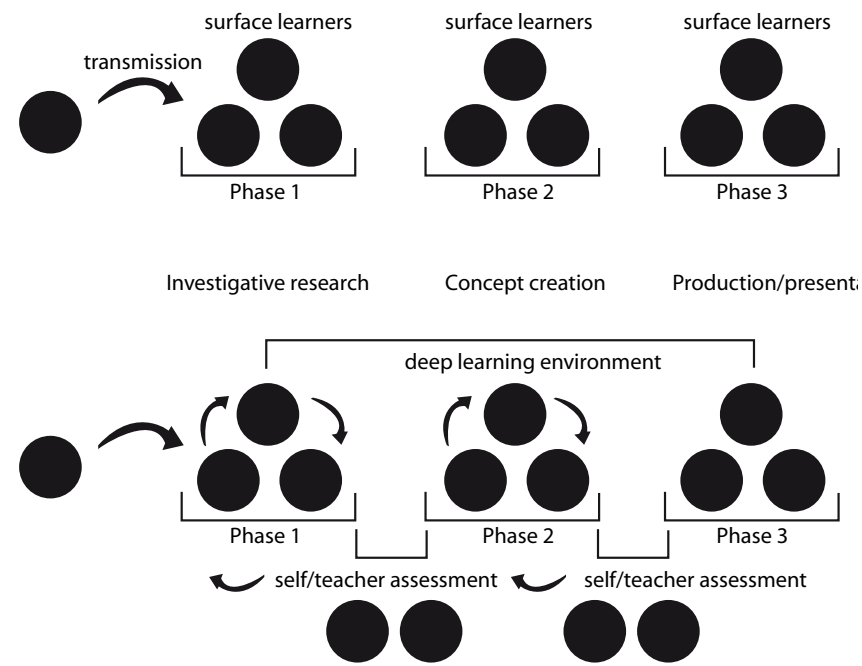
I discovered some of the complexities of teaching and began to find corresponding complexities within graphic design education.

Through this process I began to understand some pedagogical concepts and their value for graphic design education such as:

- 1 The importance of an aligned curriculum
- 2 The implications of surface and deep learning.
- 3 How the teachers' approach and perception towards teaching and learning creates different learning environments for the student.
- 4 How the students' approach to learning may shift depending on how they perceive the institutional and teaching/learning environment.





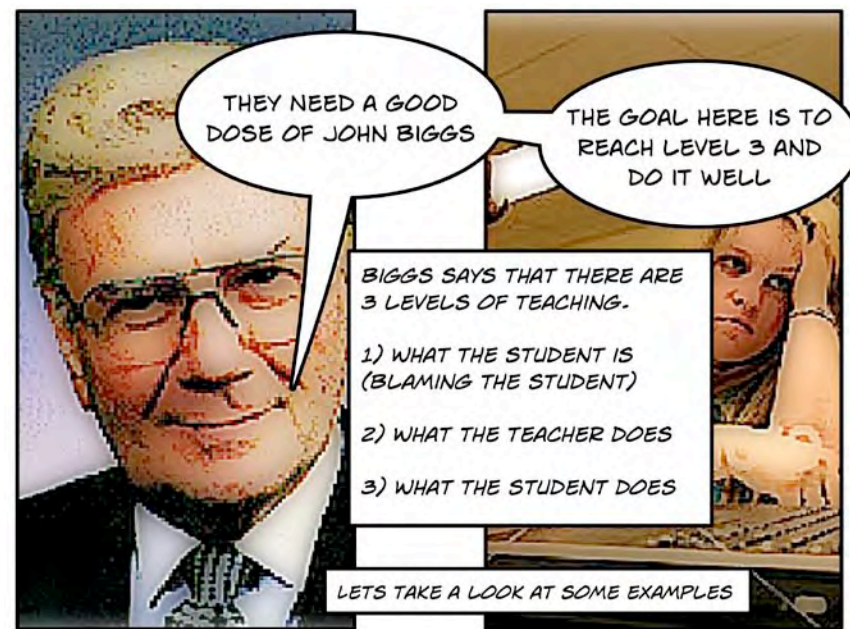


(fig. 4) Early knowledge model  
Based on Constructive Alignment. (Biggs, Tang, 2007)

To better understand these discoveries and integrate them into a graphic design research project, I started to use graphics to communicate what I was learning. Following concepts ranging from diagrams (fig. 4) to flash presentations, I started to use the comic language (method 3) to create graphic design education scenarios.

These scenarios (fig. 5) at first used various educational personas such as John Biggs, Boyer and others to dictate principles such as surface and deep learning to the viewer. At this stage I was using the comic as a reflective tool to better understand how pedagogical principles are used within the graphic design educational context. Initially, I did not consider it as a communication project for teachers. After consultation and review through peers and other educators, it became apparent that the narrative and structure of my first comic was pretentious. Some educators are not aware of the pedagogical lexicon and the narrative did not surface situations in graphic design education that connect closely with pedagogical principles and theory.

**...it became apparent that the narrative and structure of my first comics was pretentious.**



(fig. 5) comic draft



This led towards a greater simplification in the language and a new narrative that created a stronger relationship with the viewer by creating a storyline closely linked with the day to day working environment of a graphic design teacher. By modifying and reflecting on the narrative in relation to the literature on pedagogical principles I developed a deeper understanding of how these principles could create an awareness of an enriched learning environment and possibly be used to introduce reflective practice. To understand the perceptions of students and teachers further, a teaching diary (method 4), discussed in Section 5, was developed to document a 3rd year professional practice course I was co-teaching. The diary documented my perceptions of the students' reflective practice and surface to deep approaches throughout the various segments of the course. This established a framework for a deeper understanding of:

1. How the students' approach towards learning and the teachers' perceptions of the learning environment may lead students to engage in either surface or deep approaches to learning.
2. How principles of teaching and learning may encourage process-led inquiries and deep learning approaches
3. How teaching and learning principles can provide a pathway for design students to participate in their learning of reflection and practice-based research.



**Paradigm Shift I**

These projects led to another shift in my research and consequently changed my research question.

**How can reflection and teaching and learning principles facilitate a research-learning environment in tertiary graphic design education?**

This preliminary shift in my research led to further inquiries into the use of comic language as a facilitator educational principles. Once I presented my project through a comic book, concerns were raised on the reasoning behind this choice of communication in relation to my research question. The form changed the perception of the knowledge I was disseminating. This progression created new avenues to explore through the use of visual and practice based research to investigate the craft of comics, literature reviews on graphic literacy and a

reflective study from three interviews from design educators. The investigation of the comic craft and language (see *Section 8*) coupled by a literature review of graphic literacy helped me understand the comics' intrinsic capabilities in communication and aided in the development of further drafts. The development and presentation of a poster paper for the *Glide'08* conference on design education also helped me gain a greater knowledge surrounding the role of graphic literacy in education. The paper discussed the possibilities of graphic literacy in graphic design education and how comics may provide a framework for deep learning for both teaching and students. This exercise was a fundamental step in my research, through literature supporting the claim that visuals in teaching do help facilitate deep learning, and that comics and other graphic devices may be used as reflective spaces where teachers may develop their understanding of their perceptions and conceptions of the learning environment.

**The Argument**

My argument developed after reflecting on interviews with three design educators (see *Section 7*). During the interviews I presented a set of structured questions concerning pedagogical awareness, research integration and surface and deep learning approaches along with a draft of the comic series.

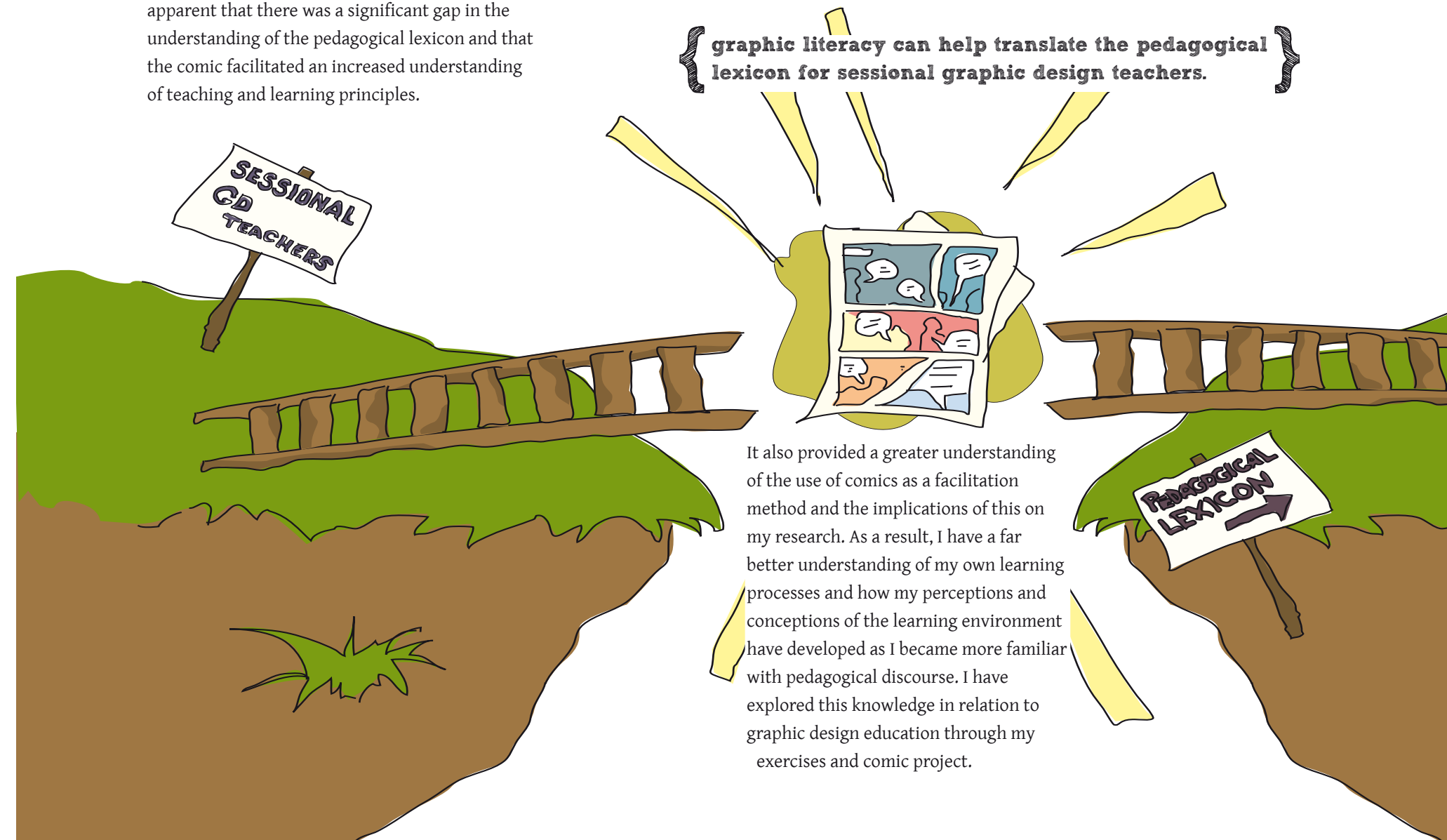
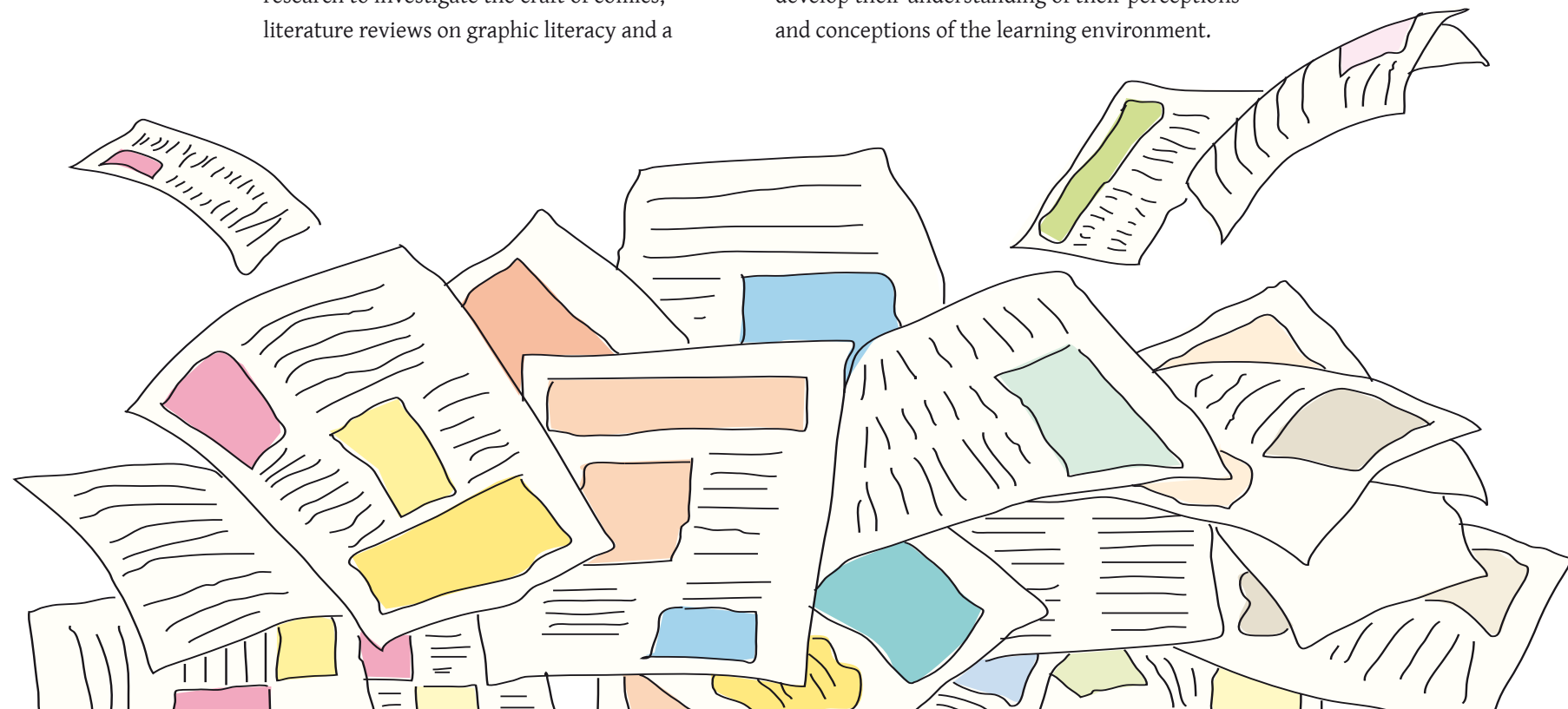
Throughout the interview process it became apparent that there was a significant gap in the understanding of the pedagogical lexicon and that the comic facilitated an increased understanding of teaching and learning principles.

This awareness developed into an understanding of how visual scenarios and dialogue can capture a highly cognitive principle or theory and translate the knowledge to a stage which may be understood by a wider audience and at the same time communicate the knowledge for different contexts.

This interview process also created a context for my argument, by refining my audience towards new and sessional teachers. The interviews created a major shift in my research because it helped me realize and better understand my argument, namely that;

**graphic literacy can help translate the pedagogical lexicon for sessional graphic design teachers.**

It also provided a greater understanding of the use of comics as a facilitation method and the implications of this on my research. As a result, I have a far better understanding of my own learning processes and how my perceptions and conceptions of the learning environment have developed as I became more familiar with pedagogical discourse. I have explored this knowledge in relation to graphic design education through my exercises and comic project.

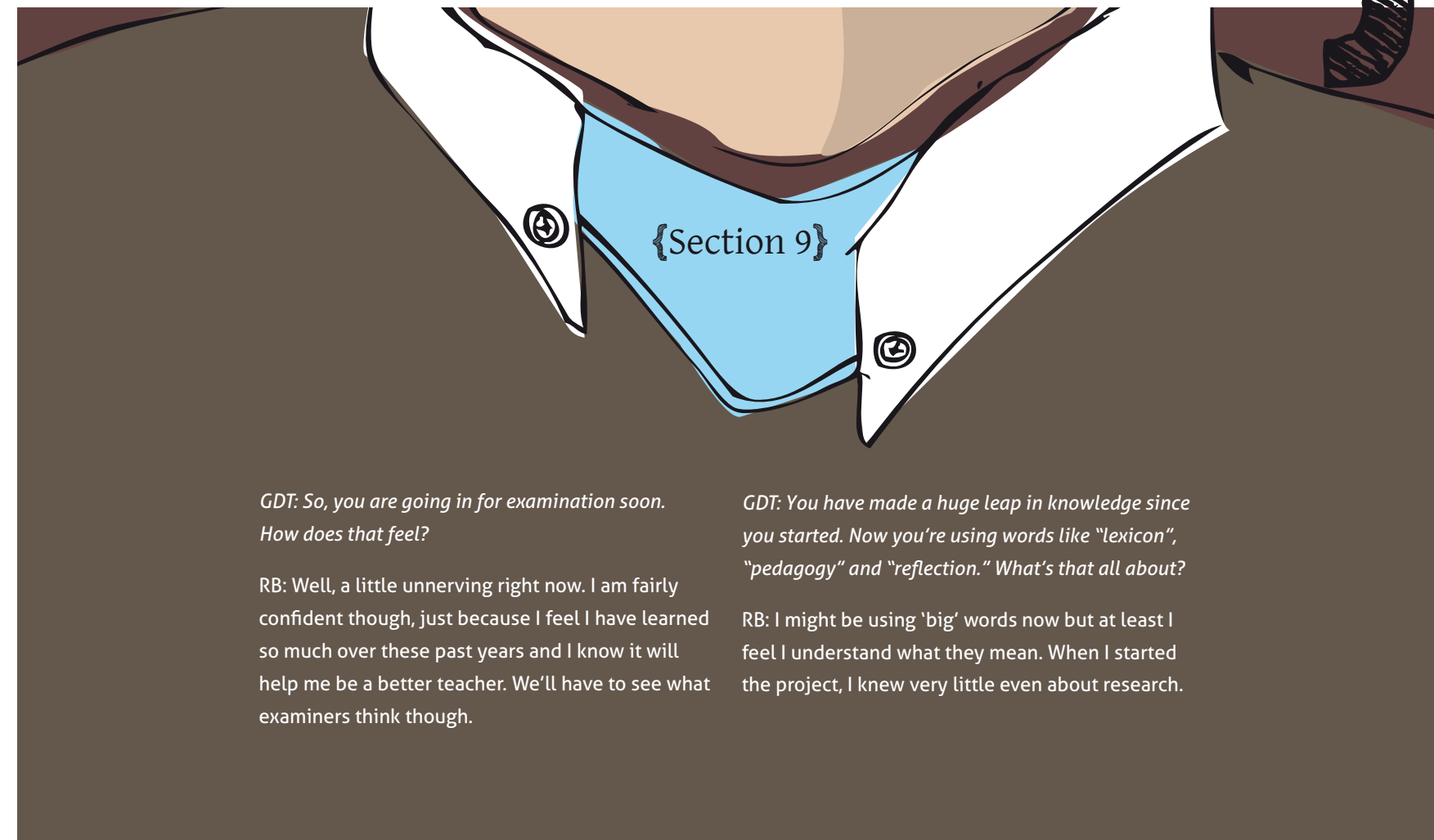






## Learning through Designing

### Roberto Bruzzese talks with GDT magazine



GDT: So, you are going in for examination soon. How does that feel?

RB: Well, a little unnerving right now. I am fairly confident though, just because I feel I have learned so much over these past years and I know it will help me be a better teacher. We'll have to see what examiners think though.

GDT: You have made a huge leap in knowledge since you started. Now you're using words like "lexicon", "pedagogy" and "reflection." What's that all about?

RB: I might be using 'big' words now but at least I feel I understand what they mean. When I started the project, I knew very little even about research.

I saw a problem in graphic design education through my experience but it took a lot of digging before I could form a solid argument. But all of that came later. My real 'researching' was working through smaller projects and exercises. It was through reflecting on my work and work of others where I learned a lot.

GDT: There you go again. It's that reflection word. So tell us, how can 'thinking back' help you learn?

RB: Well, take my first exercise. I started a blog where I wrote about all my experiences working as a graphic design teacher in a study-abroad institution. I started with the basics like what I was teaching, the experience of my students and the problems I was facing. But as I moved on to describing everything, I went a little deeper... I started to look at all the elements around me at that time including the ideology of the institution my perceptions and conceptions of the environment, etc. So, I re-wrote a lot of blog entries until I figured out all the implications of that experience. That gave me a good starting point for my research because I started to understand that it's not as simple as just adding or subtracting courses to design a program. At that time my main problem was that I was finding that many students were technology dependant and didn't dig deep enough into the design process. Ah...so many things have changed since then.

“

...it sometimes forces you to see things you might not want to.”



GDT: Sounds intense. So reflection can help in the discovery of knowledge?

RB: I think a thorough reflection helps your process as a designer and educator because it sometimes forces you to see things you might not want to.

GDT: Let's get back to your projects. So I read that one of your projects was a teaching journal. Did you really meticulously comment on every one of your classes?

RB: Well, I missed some but yes the teaching journal was a very important part of the growth of my research and as a teacher. I was reading a lot back then. I was trying to understand how the perceptions and conceptions of the students and teachers could alter the approach students used during activities. My brain was really active during those classes because I was constantly relating what was happening to the pedagogical principles I was reading. Also, at that time my research was also focused on the idea of reflective practice and research methods that may help students approach learning design just a bit deeper. So it was not only the diary that helped me but the teaching was a very important part of this masters.

GDT: Have you ever taught and undergrad class before?

RB: No, but there was a large international group and from my experience teaching in study-abroad institutes I found this familiar. I think the literature review coupled with teaching really opened my eyes to how the students were learning and how minor adjustments to learning activities could really enhance their experience.



I think I then went from being a teacher focused on what I was doing to a teacher focused on what they were doing. The journal became an activity to record my experiences so that I could learn from it later.

*GDT: What about the comic.*

*When did that come into play?*

RB: The comic idea came around the time of the teaching journal. I was trying to find a way to express all the stuff I was learning. I first started with building models and graphs but there wasn't any real dialogue in that. I mean, the missing connection was the actual environment in which graphic designers teach. I started with a program called *Comic Life*. There I used photos and speech bubbles to create a dialogue between students, teachers, and administrators. The first experimentations were pretty rough. There were no graphic design scenarios and the dialogue was basically preaching what I was reading. It came off as pretentious and the dialogue drew on a vocabulary and references sometimes unknown to teachers.

At that time I was really trying to create teaching and learning scenarios that would help me understand some pedagogical principles and theories. The characters in the comic were my puppet figures in which I could modify constantly to interact and reflect within a graphic design teaching context.

**“I was really trying to create teaching and learning scenarios that would help me understand some pedagogical principles and theories.”**

*GDT: But now it's something different, no?*

RB: It has progressed, as it should have. The comic is now being positioned for casual/new teachers in graphic design. It presents situations, problems and environments that they might encounter at the same time introducing key pedagogical principles that are vital for any teaching/learning environment, with a graphic twist. On another note the comic also presents my knowledge through this masters and demonstrates how the use of graphics and understanding of graphic literacy could help translate the pedagogical lexicon for new or casual teachers.

*GDT: Outstanding! When did you figure out your argument?*

RB: I didn't figure out my argument or as I would like to say 'it hit me in the face' until I started talking to some teachers, especially in the study-abroad area. I found I had a real hard time discussing some pedagogical principles because I was using a lexicon that for some was quite unknown. I started to demonstrate what I was talking about through my comic and I found that it improved the depth of the discussion. At the same time though I was writing a paper on visual literacy and how some methods have been used in teaching to enhance students' cognitive ability. I started to build up references and an understanding of how graphics can really help translate a lexicon.

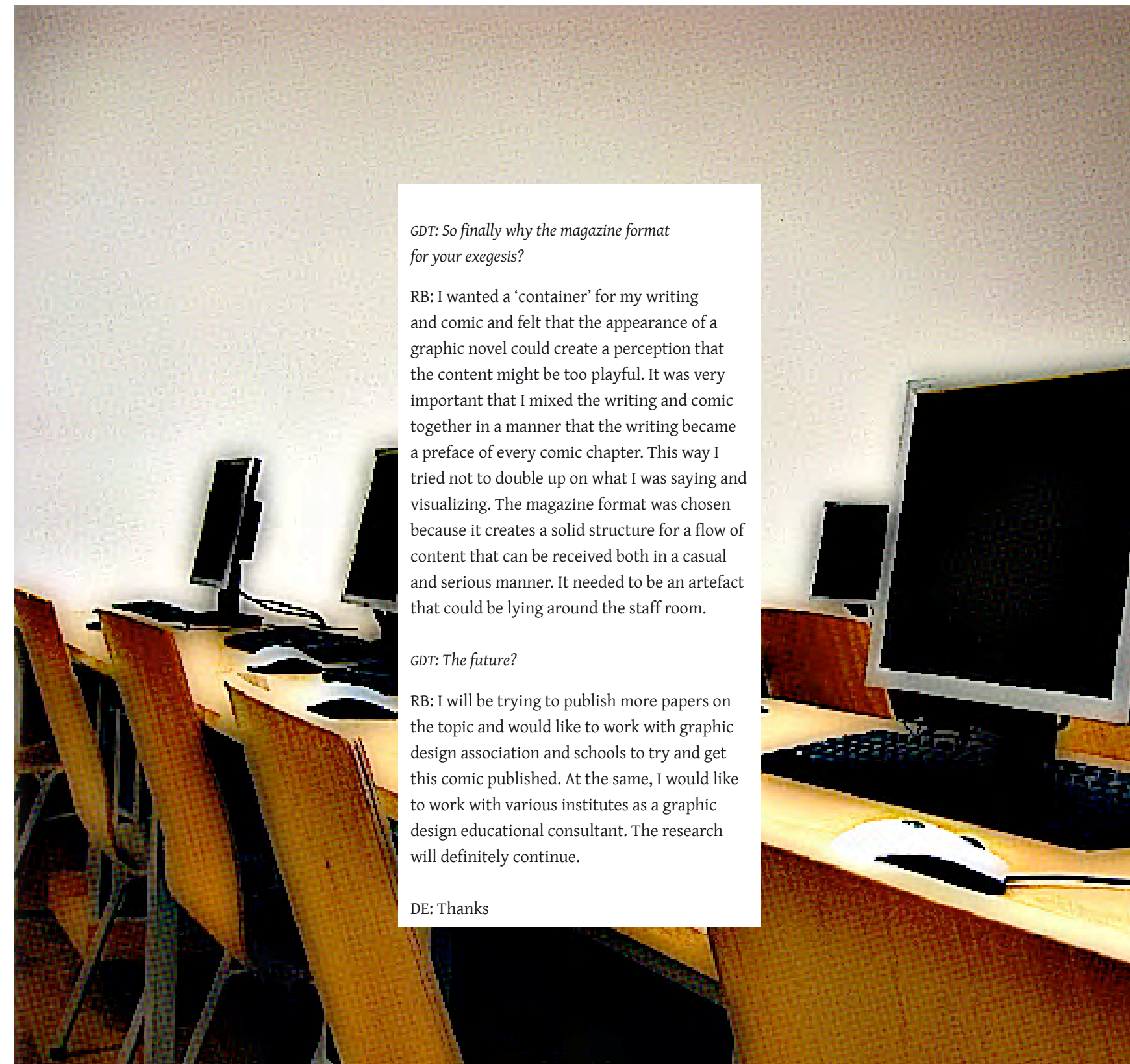
*GDT: So finally why the magazine format for your exegesis?*

RB: I wanted a 'container' for my writing and comic and felt that the appearance of a graphic novel could create a perception that the content might be too playful. It was very important that I mixed the writing and comic together in a manner that the writing became a preface of every comic chapter. This way I tried not to double up on what I was saying and visualizing. The magazine format was chosen because it creates a solid structure for a flow of content that can be received both in a casual and serious manner. It needed to be an artefact that could be lying around the staff room.

*GDT: The future?*

RB: I will be trying to publish more papers on the topic and would like to work with graphic design association and schools to try and get this comic published. At the same, I would like to work with various institutes as a graphic design educational consultant. The research will definitely continue.

DE: Thanks





## Section 10 Conclusion

1

This exegesis has addressed how graphic literacy can help translate pedagogical principles and theories to sessional graphic design teachers,



2

why it is important to use graphic literacy to communicate pedagogical principles to new/casual graphic design teachers

3

and why there is a need for new/casual graphic design teachers to understand how to develop good teaching and learning environments.



A MASTERY OF THIS KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE (VAN SCHAIK, 2007) HAS BEEN DEMONSTRATED THROUGH REFLECTIVE STUDY AND PRIMARILY THROUGH THE DESIGN OF A COMIC SERIES.

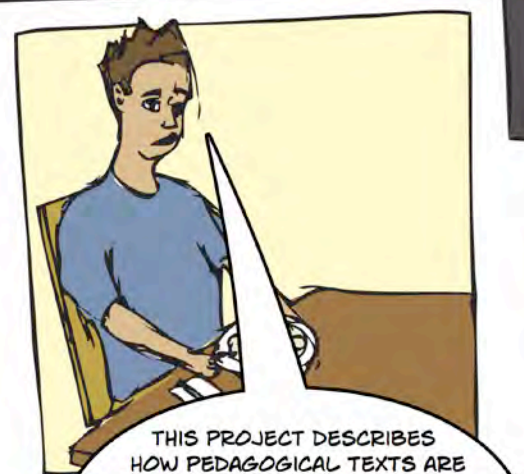


THIS RESEARCH PROJECT HAS NOT ONLY UNCOVERED ELEMENTS OF GRAPHIC DESIGN EDUCATION THAT MAY BE BENEFICIAL FOR PRACTICE AND ACADEMIA, BUT IT HAS ALSO INCREASED MY UNDERSTANDING OF GRAPHIC DESIGN EDUCATION.



IT HAS HELPED ME BECOME A BETTER TEACHER AND MY STUDENTS BETTER LEARNERS.





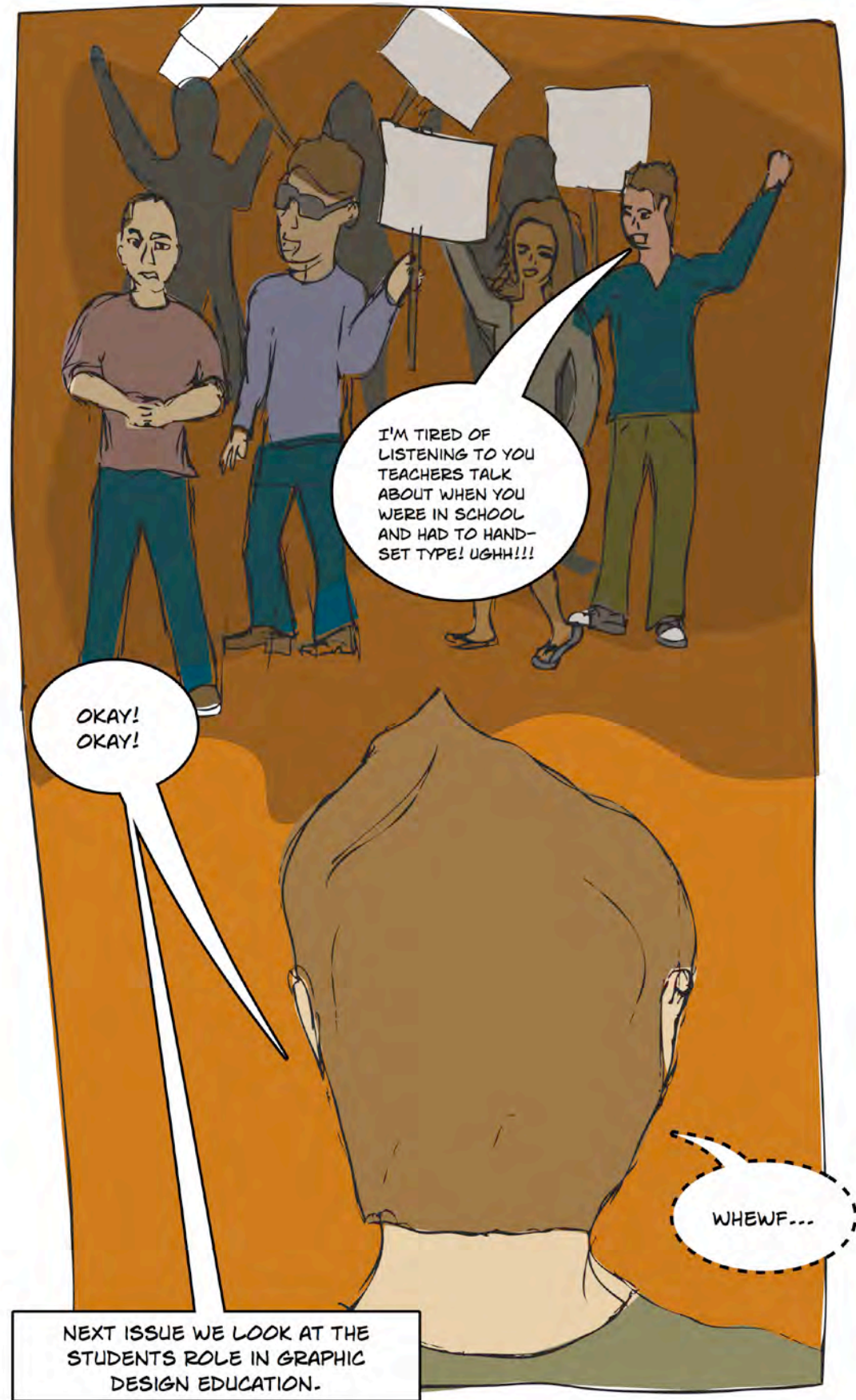
THIS PROJECT DESCRIBES HOW PEDAGOGICAL TEXTS ARE WRITTEN IN LANGUAGE THAT IS NOT COMMONLY USED IN GRAPHIC DESIGN EDUCATION AND HOW THIS MAKES PEDAGOGICAL THEORY AND PRINCIPLES UNREACHABLE TO MANY NEW TEACHERS.



THE GRAPHIC LANGUAGE CAN HELP BRIDGE THIS GAP BY USING ITS VISUAL DYNAMICS TO REPRESENT COGNITIVE INFORMATION IN A LEXICON THAT IS FAMILIAR TO GRAPHIC DESIGNERS.







# The End.



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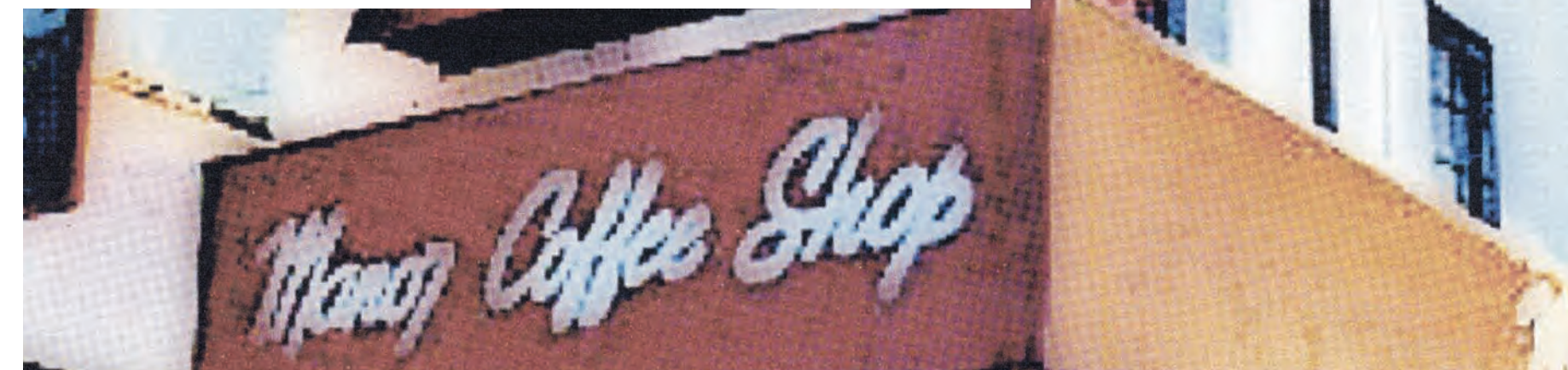
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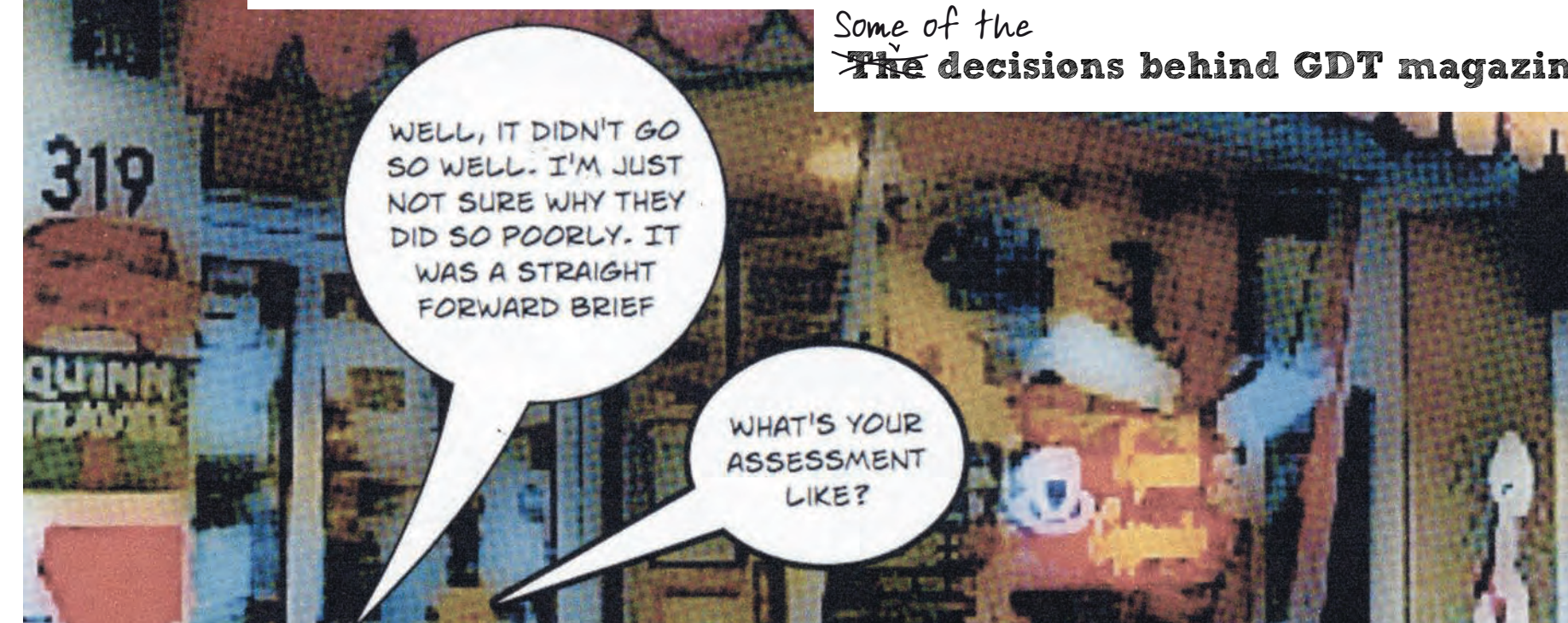


## Behind the Scenes



### talking the talk, walking the walk

Some of the  
The decisions behind GDT magazine

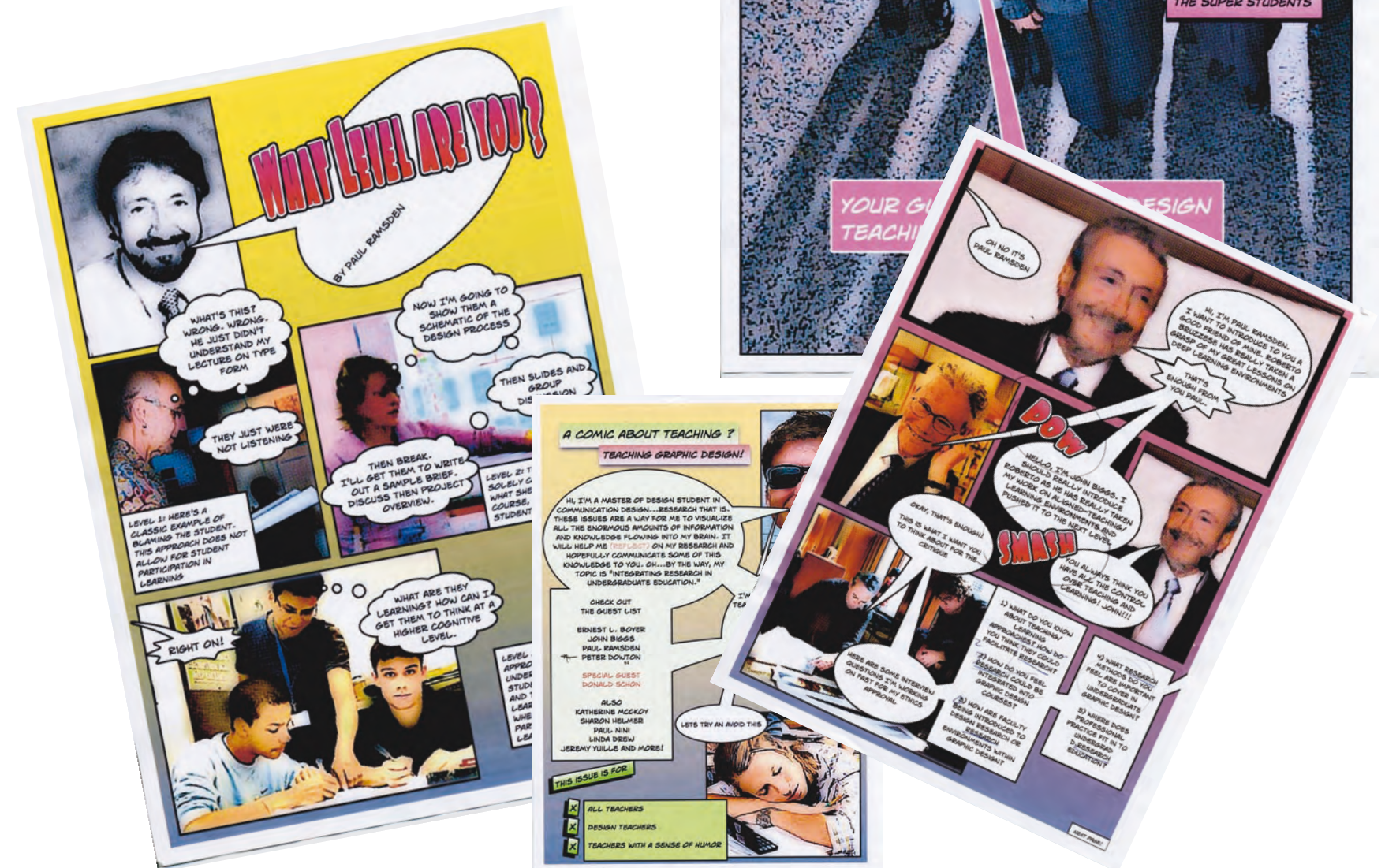






### Early Script Ideas

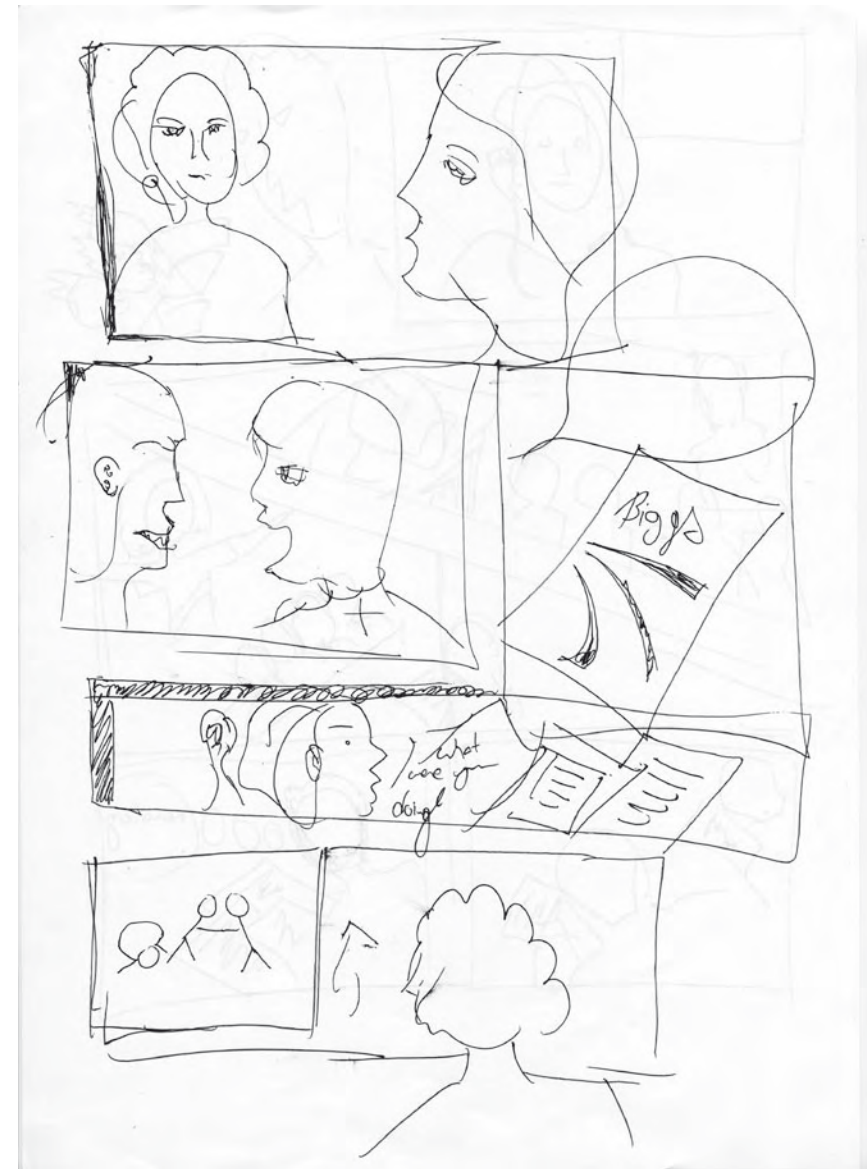
In fact, my original title was the superfluous title 'The Super Teachers.' At this point, I had not even thought of illustrating the magazine myself...actually at this point it was not even a magazine or part of my exegesis. I was just experimenting.



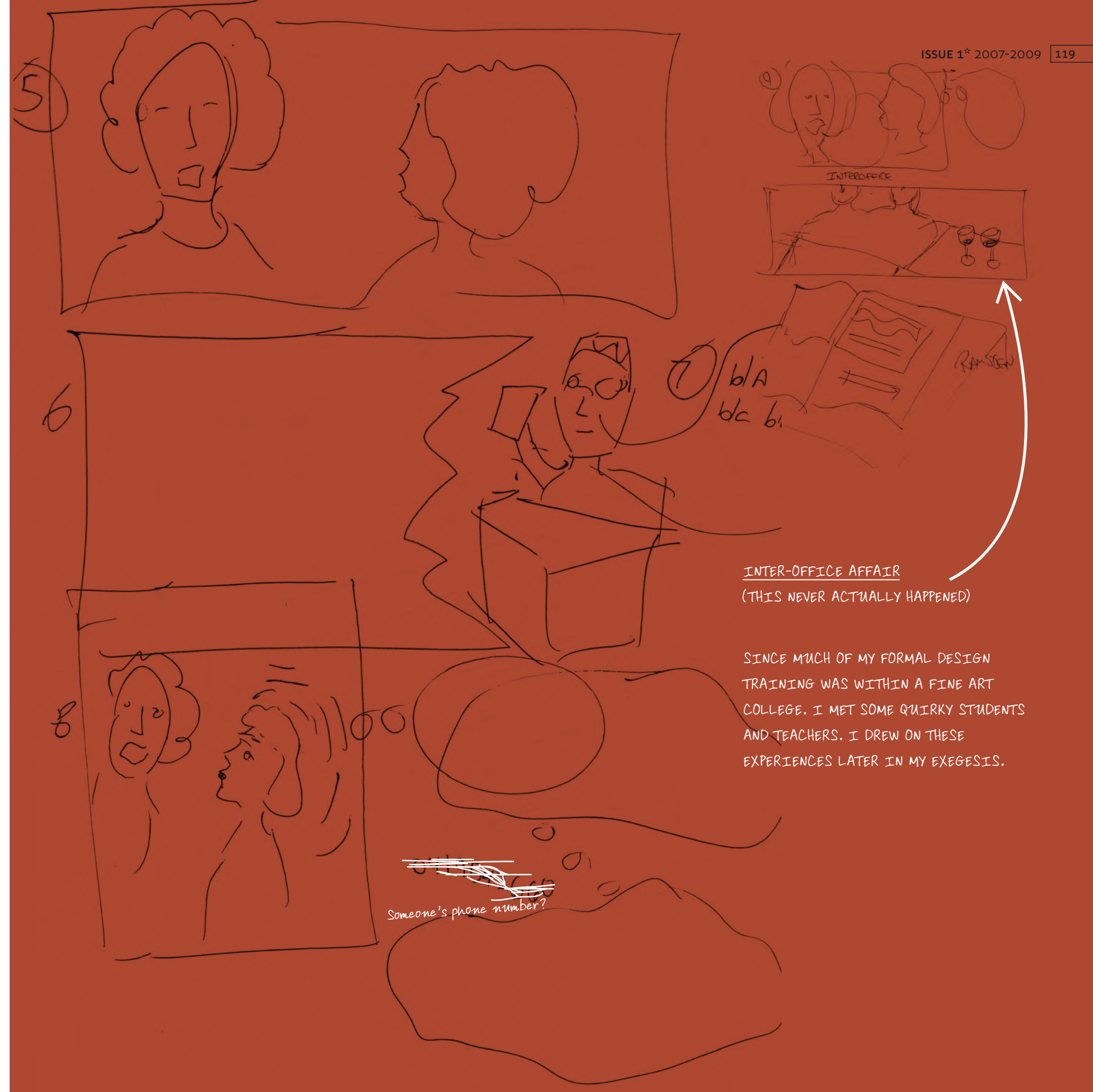


### Sketching my Experiences

My first script was inspired by the cinema. The storyline was complicated and twisted and resembled an art house movie more than any communication design research. I made some quick storyboards about a teacher arriving at a typical 'art/design' college and the adventures that came about.



Of course most of his adventures were based on my past experiences teaching in private colleges. The characters were wacky and interesting, but there were too many sub-plots to handle and thus my research became diluted inside the complex story.



INTER-OFFICE AFFAIR  
(THIS NEVER ACTUALLY HAPPENED)

SINCE MUCH OF MY FORMAL DESIGN TRAINING WAS WITHIN A FINE ART COLLEGE. I MET SOME QUIRKY STUDENTS AND TEACHERS. I DREW ON THESE EXPERIENCES LATER IN MY EXEGESIS.

Someone's phone number?



## Discovering Scenarios

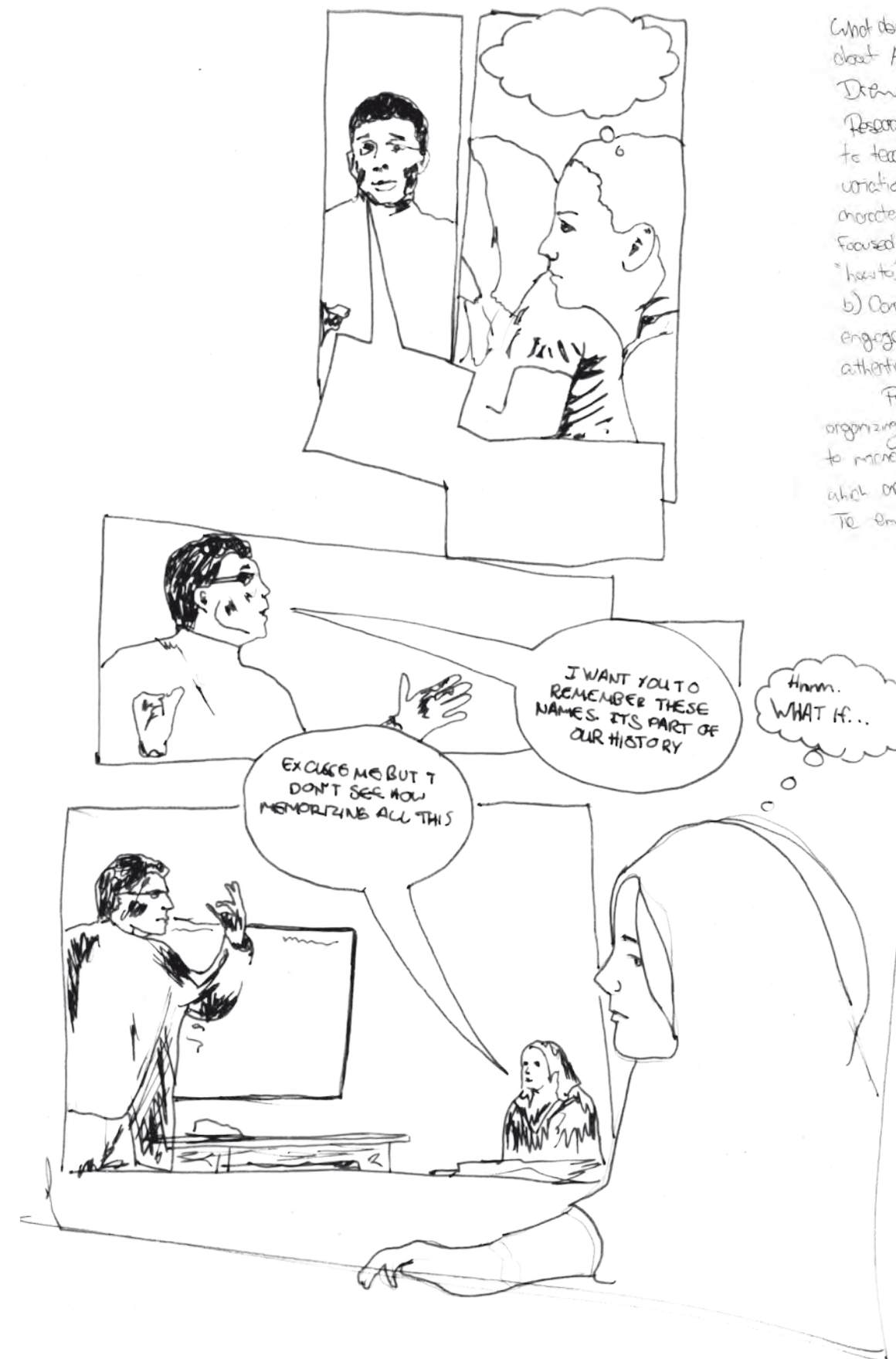
As I moved on from the movie script sketches, I found it difficult to communicate pedagogical principles through the characters. I was paraphrasing quotes and key theories into the characters' script, which inevitably did not create any deep learning experiences. I soon understood that in order to demonstrate deep learning, the script needed encompass how the characters experienced a teaching and learning environment. I started reflecting on my teaching experiences again, this time making note of comments and situations that I observed or was involved myself.

### SECTION 2

This is quite a large section and there are a lot of elements in here that I felt I needed to describe in order to create a proper foundation for the reader. Here I describe Ramsden's concept of surface and deep learning and Biggs' three levels of teaching. I felt both of these were very important to describe visually right at the beginning of the novel because they lead on to many other important theories and principles. On the first page, I used a frustrated teacher screaming from a window about his students' apparent lack of interest in his class. I cannot even count how many times I have witnessed this desperate action, even from myself! I thought this could be an excellent opportunity to introduce Biggs' three-levels of teaching theory and build some personalities of my characters around these emotions, which are very real in design teaching.



A sketch from Dan Pink's graphic novel Johnny Bunko. (Pink, 2008)



What does Moby say about Alignment?  
 Draw  
 Research into teacher's approach to teaching identifies distinct variations (Passet, Triguell, 1999)  
 characterised: Information Transmission/Teacher focused approach, where teachers tell students - students "have to" telling stories about their own research.  
 b) Conceptual change/Student focus, where teachers engage students in the practice of research; authentic setting a team work.  
 Practice based learning is a way of conceptualizing and organizing student learning, where the teacher encourages students to manage projects involving complex problem solving skills, which are set in the context of professional practice.  
 The emphasis of the learning is on peer-learning = process

6x25 = 150  
 5x25 = 125  
 1.518.750

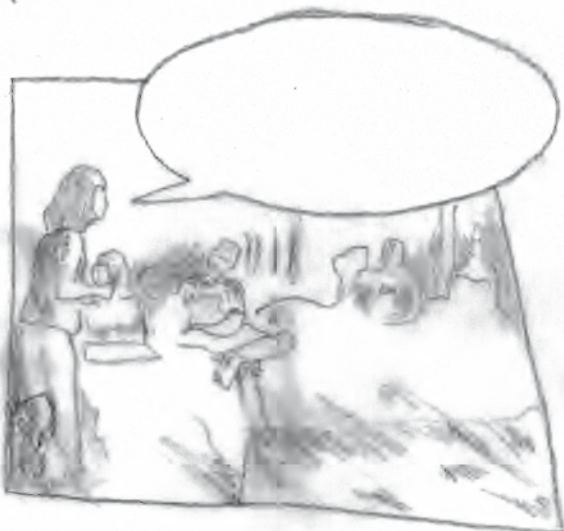
### SECTION 4

While the first comic section mainly discussed teacher perceptions within a deep learning environment it also smoothly brought the reader into the next section discussing teaching and learning activities and the principle of the aligned curricula. A typography lesson was the chosen scenario, because it was a traditional graphic design course, and it was a common scenario in my experience where teachers rush through learning activities without understanding if the activity is aligned with the intended outcomes.

It also gave me an opportunity to introduce the significance of the student perceptions in teaching and learning.



THESE WERE ORIGINALLY TRACED FROM SOME PHOTOS I TOOK AT A DESIGN COLLEGE I ONCE WORKED AT IN FLORENCE, ITALY

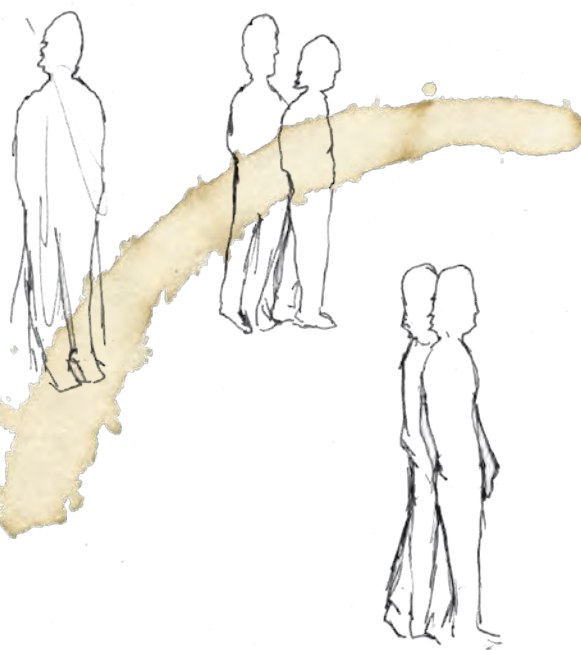


(Occasionally, I inserted the script as I was tracing the scenarios. This often created a dense and complex language that did not help create a realistic teaching environment. I quickly moved from using words like analyse, clarify and visually respond in one sentence).



SECTION 6

Here, I decided to create a scenario based around a lesson plan of teaching Illustrator skills. Since this was common skill based technical course that many new teachers are imposed to teach including myself, I thought this would be an excellent opportunity to demonstrate how this 'typical' course can be brought towards something rich with learning experiences including the practice of reflection and research. (Just a note: I have taught Illustrator so many times that I needed to see if I could extend the knowledge towards something a bit more functional).



## Character Studies

### The Beginning

My initial character studies came after one of my reviews at the GRC (Graduate Research Conference) at RMIT. My examiners suggested I look more closely to the craft of comics to help me try and expand my current use of graphic style. After rough sketches developed from various script ideas, I started to develop the expressions of my characters individually. This was something very new to me because I never really nurtured this illustration skill especially when it was concerning emotions and actions. The physical appearances of many of my characters were taken from actual teachers that I have known in the past, mixed in with a little bit of Manga inspirations from my visual research. I was clearly disappointed with the results in the beginning but I pursued on, even though I thought I should have hired an illustrator. I am glad I did not.

I USED TRACING PAPER FIRST TO GET A ROUGH OUTLINE OF THE FIGURES AND THEN RE-DREW THEM.

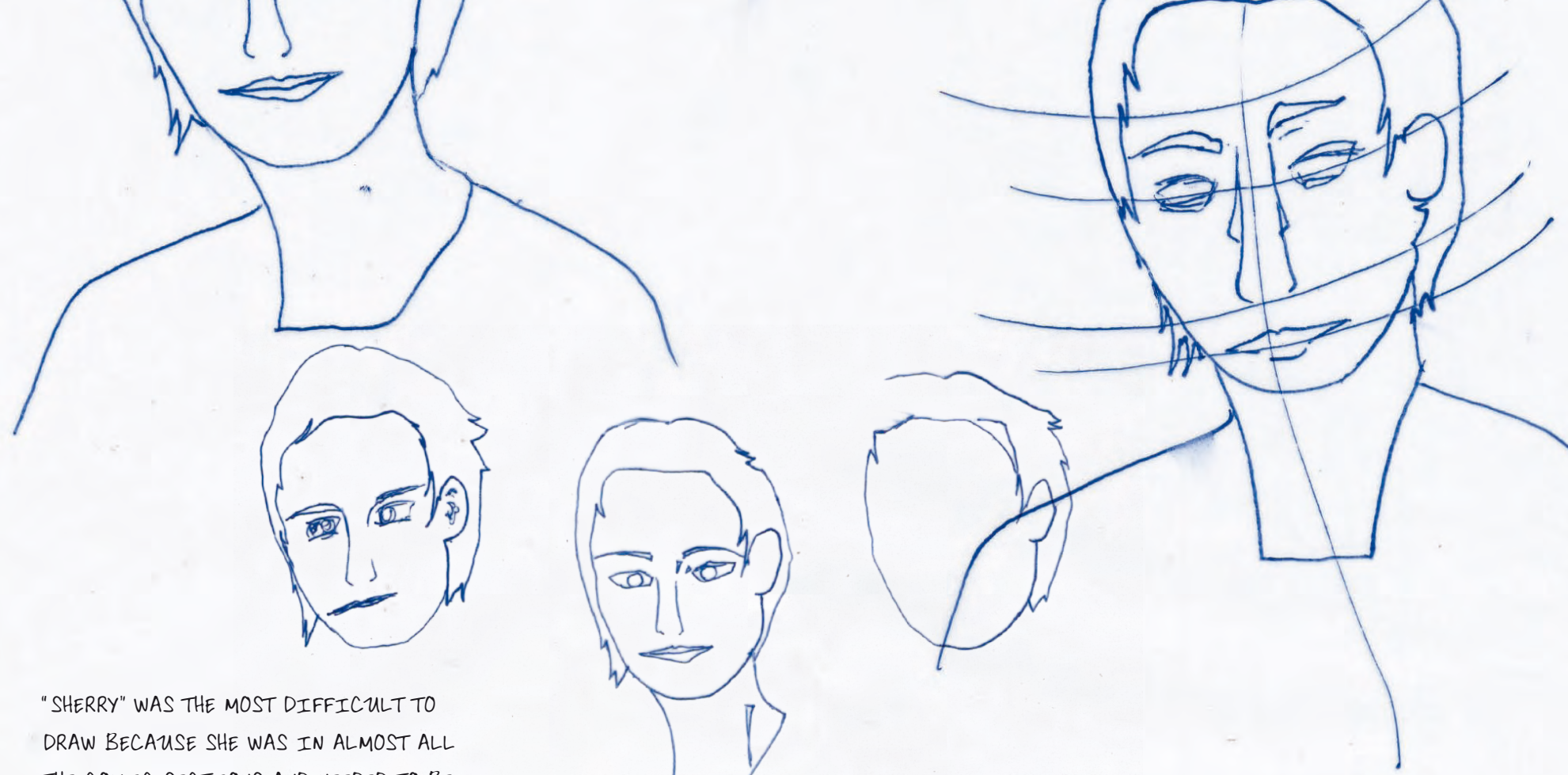
### The Middle

As I continued to work on some of my characters and deeper within my research, their style changed as well. It was as if they were maturing, just as my technique was and the impetus of my research. I think this is interesting and I comment more about this in the reflective brief on (Page 115). This is why it was so important to not re-illustrate many of the characters as my technique developed. The initial illustrations demonstrated my knowledge of the chosen medium.

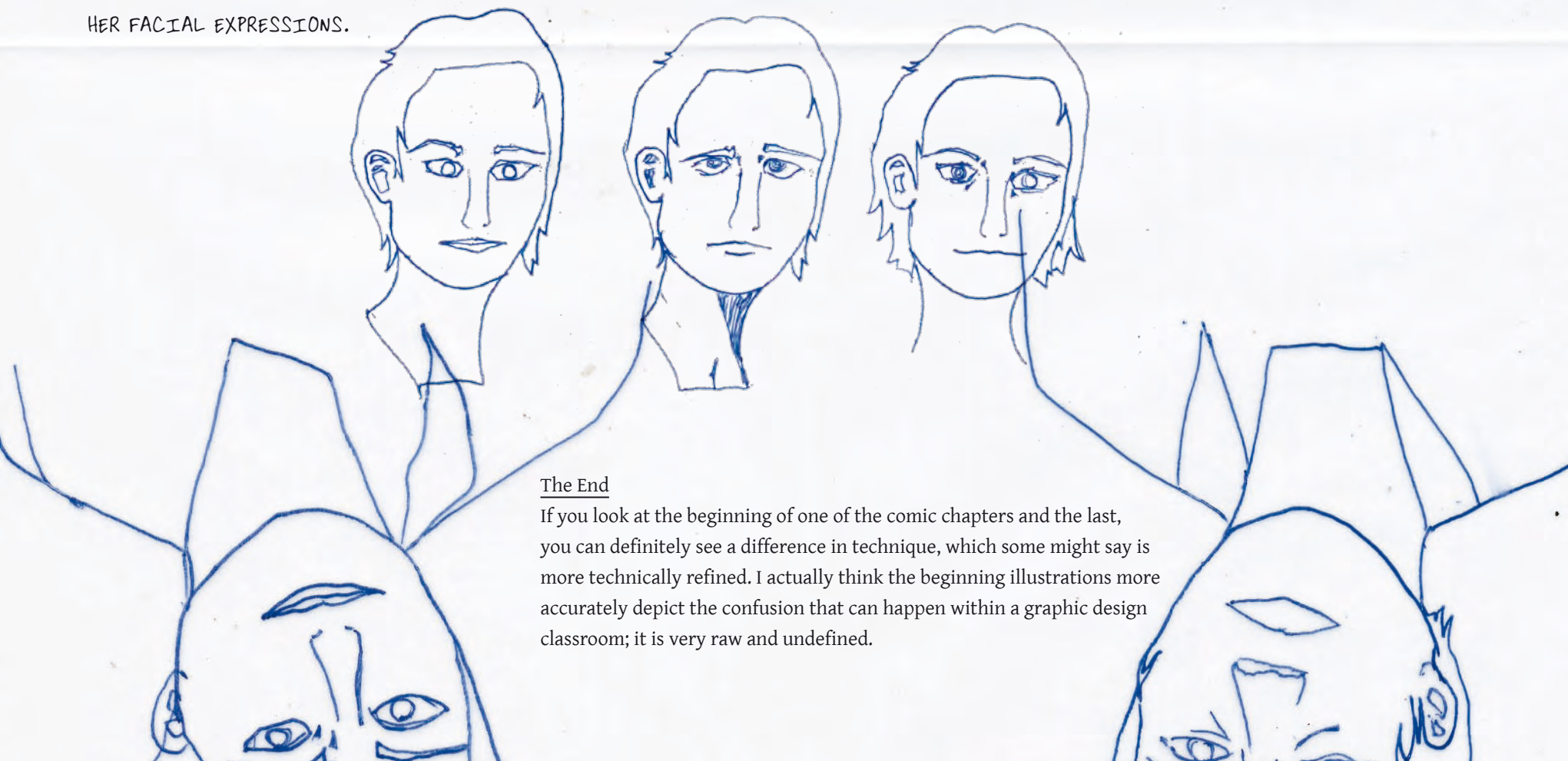
THE TRACING EVENTUALLY STOPPED BECAUSE IT WAS FORCING THE STYLE TOO MUCH. A MORE NATURALLY CRUDE TECHNIQUE DEVELOPED, WHICH ACTUALLY INVITED MORE EXPRESSIVENESS IN THE CHARACTERS.







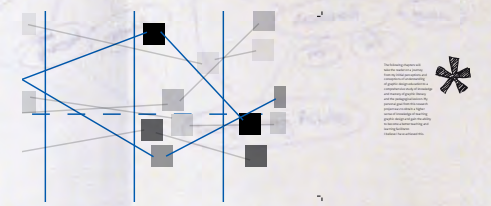
"SHERRY" WAS THE MOST DIFFICULT TO DRAW BECAUSE SHE WAS IN ALMOST ALL THE COMIC SECTIONS AND NEEDED TO BE VERY VERSATILE, ESPECIALLY IN HER FACIAL EXPRESSIONS.



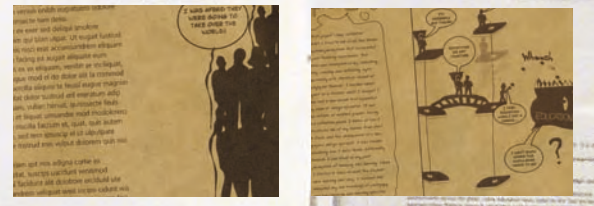
**The End**  
If you look at the beginning of one of the comic chapters and the last, you can definitely see a difference in technique, which some might say is more technically refined. I actually think the beginning illustrations more accurately depict the confusion that can happen within a graphic design classroom; it is very raw and undefined.

### More than just Graphics

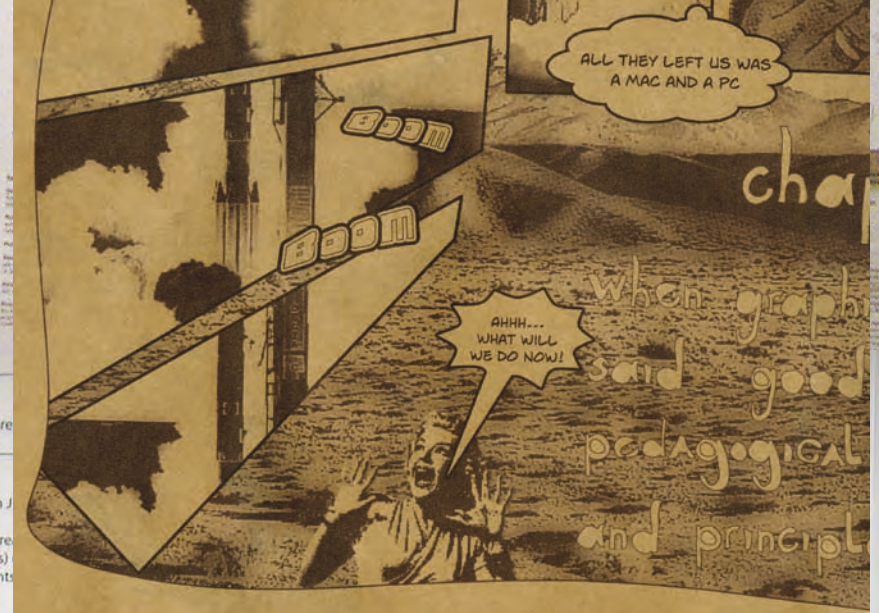
My walls at home turned into a wartime control room.



### "The Method behind the Madness"



I even made a comprehensive sketch of a couple chapters using only figures drawn with the pencil tool in illustrator.



**Researched**  
How people learn  
Reflective Practice  
develop thinking on action-based research  
**Understanding**  
Limited understanding of reflection  
Developing research questions  
Limited scope of "educational theories" or history or pedagogical forces.

Melbourne Full-time

April, 2007  
Skype Chat Jeremy/Laurene  
Suggested I read Schon and re what I have done in the past  
August, 2007  
First face-t-face meeting with J  
Need to build my proposal concentrate my study in an area Res. current methods (models) Why is it important for students Read Downton, Schon, Boyer Looking at honors, MA gap

Presented Research Proposal

October, 2007 (GRC 1)  
**Panel Suggestions**  
Need to look into the terminology I was using  
Discover the forces within my own practice and in design education  
**Discoveries**  
Needed to understand more about my own perceptions and conceptions before trying to understand my res. questions.

Turning Point in Research

**Thinking**  
educational models (Boyer scholarship) reading: Biggs, Ramsden et al

**Knowledge**  
Deeper understanding of the teaching environment and the surrounding forces  
A greater understanding of my own perceptions/concept  
A discovery of the "true" problem within my curriculum, design

**Doing**  
Deep-reflection exercise

Chapter 2  
STUDENT SURFACE LEARNING (SSL) TEACHING

UNDERSTANDING STUDENT PERCEPTIONS AND DEEP TEACHING/LEARNING  
Here I give a guest lecture using g. literacy to help facilitate like diagrams, etc.

ESTABLISHING AN ALIGNED CURRICULA TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES DEEP REFL

PHOTOSHOP (SETTING AN ALIGNED CURRICULA)



The Plan

Comic Introduction:

This will give a brief introduction of the characters the narrator Jo copyright circumstances. It woul

Preface:

I wrote a brief introduction to my scene for the narrative. Its tone chapter.

Introduction:

Basically this will be a summary

Chapter 1: The New Pedagogic

This chapter discusses the impe research in design which helped to discuss how pedagogical pri environments and that there is a lexicon and that g. lit can help th deep learning to lead a foundati

Comic: I don't understand them

What: Teachers' perception and This also presents scenarios wi characters, institutional forces

Chapter 2: Student Perceptions

Discusses Implications of stude Sidebar: Teaching Journal

Comic: "I'm finished" syndrome

What: Understanding types of k Guest lecture, casual discussio

Masters Map

Chapter 3: The aligned curricul

Teaching and learning activitie Sidebar: Deep Reflective Exer

Comic: I have to teach Photosh

This comic chapter will present modify their curricula although and knowledge to facilitate dee

Chapter 4: The role of Graphic

Sidebar: interviews

Comic: conclusion of comic

Trials of Comic: A reflective st

Conclusion:

February 27, 2009

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*I thought this was funny. I was limited to only 3 copies of republished credited samples of Scott McCloud's work*

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DESIGN TEACHERS!  
RESEARCH? LEARNING?  
WHAT IS THIS GUY  
THINKING!

**Back to the Script**

Although there was some definite areas of possible modification, I believe the stories I choose were the correct choice for this Masters project. Each script was carefully selected from my teaching experiences and the ones of others I have witnessed. They were reflected upon in order to understand if the scenario could be used in conjunction with a particular pedagogical problem I wished to address.

In the next series I wish to explore the graphic design education environment even more intensely, uncovering more nuanced 'situations' that happen in the classroom. Perhaps this time I feel it is important to explore learning more from the students perspective and possibly introduce how practice is influencing our teaching methods.

Stay Tuned!



## ...after the examination

One element I would have liked to introduce into this research was the practical effectiveness of the ideas I proposed within the comic series. By taking the comics hypothetical teaching and learning principles and theories into the classroom and reflecting on the outcomes, could have enriched further my argument. One examiner stated that I needed to be accountable for my research and explain in depth how I was to implement and review my findings. The examiner then states that this accountability must also be held to the decisions I made in the creation of the exegesis, and that true mastery comes from the reflection, admittance and acceptance of these decisions.

In order to exercise what I have learned through this research concerning reflection and knowledge, it is essential that I now dissect my findings in order to extend my learning. Upon reading the exegesis again, I found one element quite striking—my impetus seems to be so far back into the magazine that the reader must have recognised its reasoning far too late. This is quite double edged. If I had shifted sections so that my impetus was near the front, it would not have made much sense to describe my journey or background on why I had even pursued this research. On the other hand, leaving it to the end astounds and perplexes the reader so much that often can nullify the foundation of the impetus. Where is the middle ground? In this case, I still believe that my choice was correct and keeps the 'story' flowing at an understandable pace. However, an introductory note on where it was all heading could help lead the reader and let them keep in mind the graphic choices I had made.

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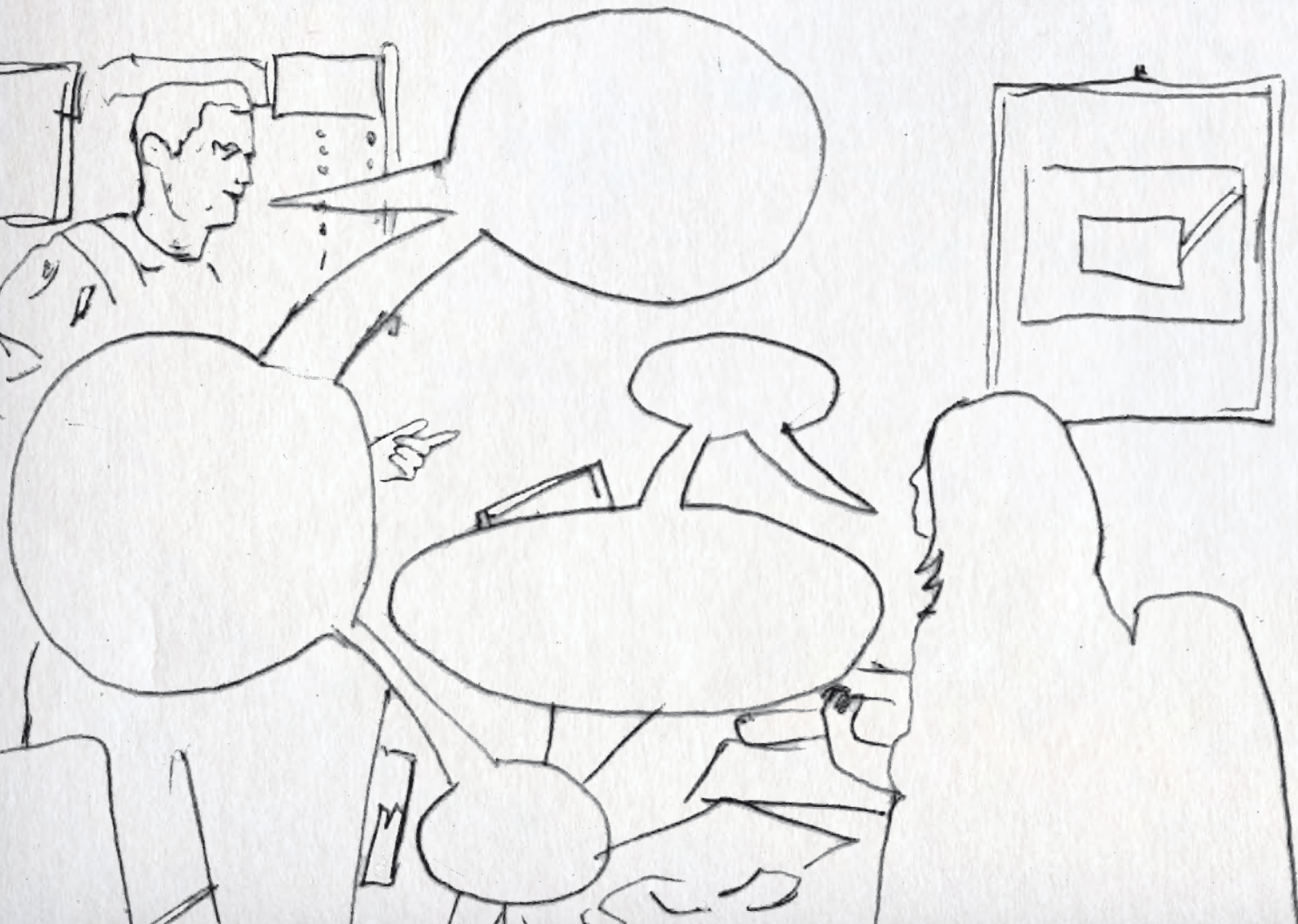


**I DID ANOTHER READ OF MY EXEGESIS.  
THIS TIME, I TRIED TO IDENTIFY THE VARIOUS GRAPHIC DEVICES I USED TO  
HELP COMMUNICATE THIS PEDAGOGICAL AWARENESS I WAS DISCUSSING.**

Originally, I thought that only the comic communicated this transfer of information and reflection, which could help engage a new teacher into pedagogical awareness, but as I moved through the exegesis I found that there were multiple uses of graphic literacy in action. For example in Section 5, where I reflected on one of my teaching experiences, I used comic bubbles as reflective pullout quotes. This is a simple but effective visual

method to help promote the idea of reflective practice. Many teachers and students are asked to reflect on our actions and processes but quite often with a foundation to help structure these thoughts. Graphic bubbles—as simple as they are—create spaces for the teacher/student to create visual hierarchy with their reflections and also layout a ‘design space’ for their thoughts. Actually, this could be a way to introduce

students and teachers into reflection by turning the task into a design project where writing and graphic elements become unified. This also backs up the research I uncovered on using graphics and text together in a multi-modal environment. This is exactly what Scott McCloud was discussing as the ‘unified language’.



**Illustration style: choices and reflection**

Moving on to Section 3, the aligned curricula, this section typically did not describe any visual methods that could help create any pedagogical awareness. This is quite unfortunate for a section detailing the literature around this area. The graphics used, helped create flow and hierarchy and relationships between the writing but it now seems very aesthetically based and not necessarily informed by the content. I think I could have explored this area further and pushed the literature reviews into something more visual.

There has been a lot of talk about my illustrations style or lack of it in my exegesis comic sections... maybe too much talk. I

guess the question for many graphic designers is why the sketchy, unrefined, technically poor presentation? First, while the final version may look ‘unrefined’, I went through many revisions and drafts before understanding how this style works to help drive the research. You may see more of this in the “Behind the Scenes” on page 115. Originally, I wanted the characters to be quite realistic, almost painted figures of the 1950s comics. Aesthetically, I’m drawn to that style, so undoubtedly I pushed my first sketches in this manner but as I moved further

and further away from the technical assistance of the computer and started to draw more myself, I noticed a change. My own illustration style is naturally rough. Firstly this is because I am not an illustrator and have had little drafting experience.

As I moved from comic section to comic section my hand got naturally more skilled but nevertheless the technique remained similar. I was now reading a lot of Manga and I really wanted to see that style in my comic but the more I experimented, the more I realised how important it was to ‘describe’ the characters in my own style. Comic literature told me that the simpler the technique

was, the easier it would be for the audience to connect with what I was trying to say.

This was important because it the script was already dense and reflected on many times, trying to distil the knowledge to something explicit through a deep learning experience.

There has been a lot of talk about my illustrations style or lack of it in my exegesis comic sections... maybe too much talk.





## The exegesis as an example of good graphic design

But there was more to it than that. I think the style also helped reflect the knowledge and awareness of pedagogical principles to something that I was detailing in the script to something obtainable and real. The 'unfinished' soft and hard lines making my characters alive also represented the idea of the artefact, which I discussed earlier in the exegesis. I mentioned how through my teaching experience I witnessed more and more students focusing on the artefact of design and not the process. Well, I learned that its not the artefact or the process that makes learning design good or bad but how it is taught and trying to engage students to be constantly analysing and dissecting their process is the hardest part of teaching but the most necessary skill of a teacher.

So, now thinking more about it, my illustration technique not only helped engage the reader but also created a strong statement regarding the use of the artefact and how the style was a method for my to engage readers deeply into my impetus; its simplicity reflects the central part of my argument. Great! It took me a long time to accept the 'design' I created for my exegesis. In the beginning it was floating all over the place. When you start into your research, you always want to design and then at the end you seem to

have an urge not to—at least I had this feeling. It was a struggle. I sometimes come back to the exegesis and reflect on the design, wondering if certain elements, such as image selection and typography communicated the message I wanted to bring forth. I think these feelings are just apart of being a good designer. A good designer always reflects on their work, learning from the faults and successes in order to understand their own process and its relationship with practice. At this stage of reflecting on my project, I am confident that the design of each section carried out a distinct message, which was communicated using principles and elements of graphic design.

Whether or not the exegesis fits within a 'traditional' example of a graphic design artefact is not that important to me as long as it demonstrates how I have used the skills and literacy of a graphic designer to create the right message for my argument. There might not be that 'refined' sense of typography or even hierarchy found in typical design magazines but in this case I will stand up for what I have done. The typeface choose are spot on. The headings sketchy 'school' appearances fit well with the content and are visually contrasty and blocky enough to break sections evenly. The body text as works well—a simple serif

that is easy to read and not drawing too much attention to itself. What could have been modified is the spacing between the subheadings and the body text. It seems too cramped and doesn't create enough space for the reader to pause in between sections of text. I think the choice of the six columns works well. It's classic, but it gives it all a good rhythm.

The layout could not have been too exploratory because I didn't want the reader to be distracted. Just as my illustration style evolved from each section, I also believe my design (layout) changed as well. That's not something that stays very consistent but surprisingly refreshing. Some might disagree and say I should go back and change the first couple of sections, as it is a golden rule of graphic design, but I'll just leave that one to the critics. On a last note, I think I should change the title to 'journal' instead of 'magazine' because it reads better that way. I think by changing the exegesis to journal, the perception of the content is different. For designers, it might be more exploratory and fresh, still providing that 'academic' content but perhaps less concerned with the final artefact and more with the process undertaken.

## Letter to John Biggs and Paul Ramsden

August 13, 2009  
Dear John and Paul;

I thought I would write you now since you both had great influence on my Masters project and I still have some questions and comments for you. Firstly, your research is great and I admire how you approach pedagogy and your position in making teaching a little more structured and comprehensible for most teachers err, I mean researchers. Well, that is the thing Paul and John. You both go on and discuss how we teachers should engage more deeply and get our students to that 'deep' learning environment but you present this information in a very surface manner. What's with all that text? For design teachers, its pretty overwhelming. Okay...you had some tables and charts but that scientific presentation of teaching is not really reflexive is it?

Sorry about that, maybe I started off too hard. It is just now I need to reflect on what I have actually learned through the design of my exegesis and you both keep popping up. Paul, your description of surface and deep learning is accurate within pedagogical environments. I felt this was an essential theory to communicate to graphic design teachers using the visual language. To translate that lexicon was difficult and by no means perfect but I think it delivered a fresh perspective on pedagogical principles and theories and how they can be communicated.

I found it ironic actually that both of you discussed and promoted reflection and even the use of graphics as a teaching and learning activity in order to promote a deep learning environment but in the end, for me anyway, it was so difficult to sift through all your rhetoric to form some concise understanding of your teachings. It seems that your books, somehow missed the point in 'engaging students to approach learning in a different way.'

I hope you take this as constructive criticism and I don't receive any death threats. You see, I admire your works very much as do many others academics and teachers, but don't you want to see your work go out to a broader audience?

Best,  
Roberto Bruzzese



# Dissemination Plan

To move this research forward and discover if the outcomes of the graphic novel does in fact deliver what I have promised in theory, I will implement a dissemination plan.

I will publish the exegesis and then raise profile and awareness around it by:

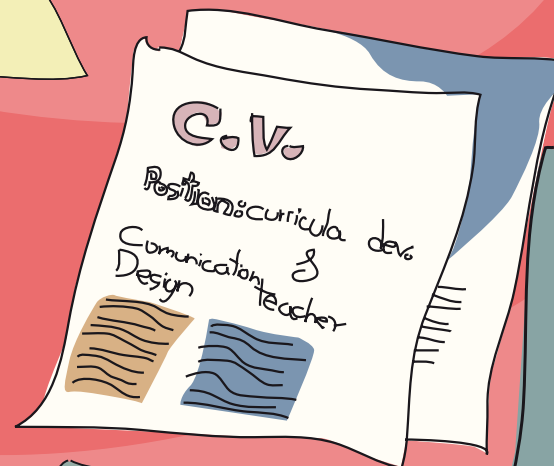
## Conferences



## Online

<http://designteaching.wordpress.com>


## Practice



**Engaging with  
educational institutions**







**IN THIS ISSUE, MASTER OF COMMUNICATION DESIGN CANDIDATE  
ROBERTO BRUZZESE GIVES US AN INSIDE LOOK AT HIS EXEGESIS:  
*TEACHING TEACHERS: LEARNING THROUGH GRAPHIC LITERACY.***

**HERE IS A PREVIEW OF WHAT HE GOT INTO!**

**“** This exegesis documents my exploration of pedagogical awareness in graphic design education and how graphic literacy can facilitate this awareness. Through a reflective practice of reading, designing, teaching and conversation, I have uncovered my perceptions and conceptions as a teacher and discovered how some pedagogical principles can help the teaching and learning environment. I have used this knowledge to create an awareness of these principles through the comic language. **”**

**ROBERTO BRUZZESE**