Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study, and thank you for signing the participant consent form and completing your demographical information. This interview will be recorded and then transcribed. Your identity will be anonymised in the transcription of this interview, as well as any other information that may identify any other person or institution. You are welcome to switch off your camera or keep it on. You may at any point withdraw from this study.

Fantastic. I think I don't think I'll find myself withdrawing [laugh].

[Laugh] Thank you, yes, this will literally be the beginning and the end of your participation, so 30 minutes. But if at some point you do get uncomfortable, please just say so.

Okay. 100%.

Cool. So just my very first question would be do you use blended learning?

So yeah, in first, in first semester, there was a different kind of balance between the two. With only second semester now I think only one of the modules that I teach that I've only have one online session a week. So first semester, yes, I did use a blended learning approach. I think it was almost I would say about 70% face to face 30% online, and then this semester, you would have close to 5% online and 95% face to face.

Okay, so you've just mentioned online and face to face. So how would you define blended learning?

So when I first looked at your kind of, your questions for me, was when I first understood blended learning was obviously a key word that firstly, the approach of using both practices of online and face to face or physically in class. But if I were to go deeper into it, it would be integrating and applying various methodologies from both of those two sides of the scale to obviously create an effective learning environment for students, obviously, with a lot of mixing and matching and trial and error, especially because it's my first year lecturing. So yeah, I would, that would, that would be kind of in a nutshell, my kind of definition of how to define blended learning, although it is primarily, maybe the definition has to do with online and face to face or physical. I think it's also, deeper down, it's the way how we apply the different teaching methodologies and practices to make sure that we get most efficiency out of our time with students and talent, for example.

So to add on to your conceptualisation of blended learning, can you give me three approaches or activities or techniques that you would use in an online setting? And three that you would use in a face to face setting?

Sure, so what I recall from first semester when it was kind of heavily driven. I would, specifically because I'm more in the creative development and the design fields, I would always, I felt from my of my personal approach the I find most effective was so most of most theory of the subject or the end the course was covered online. Where I will get obviously go through the the theory with students are included in those online sessions. I would then obviously then engage with them through questions and answers that followed the theory, obviously, to make sure that they understand that theory and the concepts that were discussed or shared. That I would also then share my knowledge and experience and skills based on that theory that was covered so that they could get more of a realistic point of view from someone that's actually been in industry. So bringing what I kind of have from the outside into the learning environment. And I will then also get them, and I think this was especially when we started this semester, where we had the first two weeks online, due to COVID, I would always make them a case where I would actually use part of the [institute-specific program deleted] activities based on the subject matter that was covered or focused on during those sessions for the students, then to break away into what I think [institute-specific program deleted] breakout groups kind of thing, where they would do those activities where the responsibility was on them to discuss and engage with one another to conceptualise as a group to show group understanding, to maybe share opinions and thoughts or their thought processes, and then kind of work on their learning through bouncing off one another. And then coming back to the main classroom or not even coming back to the main class. And I would actually then join into those groups that are made, and ask them questions and kind of get kind of just to gauge where their understanding is and learning for that. Another thing I would do would also do active learning where even as a class, I would, instead of having those breakout students or breakout groups, I would have one, obviously the main group central in the in the session, and then use for example, the whiteboard tool on [institute-specific program deleted] where I would get them to post one word responses based on something. So I asked them before I would even engage with the content, I would first ask them, like you have done with me the session - what do you understand by this word? How would you define it? What is it? Have you seen it before? Have you heard of it before? Or and then almost, get some kind of, give them an opportunity first, to share what they think it is which would then give me the opportunity to gauge to what extent are we on the same page or gauge how for maybe a group of students may be in terms of how close or how far off they are from what would be the correct the answer for that. And then in person, as I said, so, mostly, I've also did the specific because I only had my game design students online, which I have every Wednesday, where I would purely focus on textbook work. So we would go through the prescribe textbook, we look at the theory engage, as I said, with the previous online methods that I apply, and we would then make sure then when we had our face to face classes, that is then them giving them now the time to work together specifically because it's a group big group there, so the POE [portfolio of evidence] is a semester, sorry, a group project, where I would then get them to now apply what we've covered in the theory now apply it to their practical project that they have to put together for the end of the semester in their submission, where I would then sit with each group, again, face to face, check in first of all, see where they are, and kind of let them do mini presentations to me in terms of their progress, where they would get the opportunity to maybe clarify if something is correct, or if they're thinking is in the right, you know, space or direction. And then I would kind of give my kind of few points saying, hey, maybe this is not the right direction, or maybe we need to change this. I don't see this working out because of my knowledge and experience. So there, we, I would kind of it's almost, I do have some kind of, you know, the I bring the meth, all the methods across to both purely because I feel that they work and I think I'm allowing for different, you know, as I say methodologies to be applied so that we're not focused on one thing. Changing, kind of getting up this mixed approach and changed environment. There will be some times also where I do cover theory in class, but that is more through the activities where they would get the opportunity to do either the small learning activities what [institute-specific program deleted] tasks I set, that would just give them a bit more of an opportunity to just understand further, almost in a in a if you if I could say, like a practice approach that to give them an opportunity to first to see, do they actually understand it now before they now go do it in their projects that they at least have the opportunity to find out now, yes or no or benchmark themselves. Do they know what they're doing for the project, so that when it comes to them submitting or me marking, there's, at least I've kind of put in place that intervention, if you will, to make sure that they're submitting the right stuff and they've understood when they're submitting their projects, they've understood the brief, they've understood the theory, they've applied the theory correctly in all the in all the right facets. And so that would be kind of [unclear] case of basic bit of theory, there would be differently lecturer student engagement consultation in class, where they would bounce things off of me, and I'd give feedback, and then giving them the opportunity to work on smaller tasks that will be related to the classwork or coursework, which allows me another option to gauge where there are in terms of the standard and to make sure that all of them specifically because it's a group project, they're all on the same page going forward. So for those, so that would be yeah, I think that would be my six approaches broken down into the three categories that you've stipulated.

Okay, I'm just quickly going to say it back to you so that we can check that my understanding make sense to what you are experiencing. So for online you basically focus on getting through through the theory? And how actually, you didn't say this, how would you go through the theory? Would it be a presentation? How would you go through the theory?

Yes. So primarily presentation. There would also be like, for example, specifically with my game students, I would do dictating from the textbook, so they would read and follow along, where they would then be responsible, or I would give pointers as we go through it - Okay, this, you need to highlight this as important. Or I'd give them the hints to kind of pick up on those cues to say, okay, [name deleted] read this a specific way, and maybe we should highlight that kind of thing. I think because of what there was there because either it was either that I would, you know go through the textbook specifically talking about the game design, for example, I would either we would go as much as we could in class with the theory depending on how big the chapter was, sometimes the chapters would go post online one hour, so I would say okay for homework for bedtime reading tonight, just finish off the chapter. And they would then come to the next class and tell me what they've learned to ask me questions based on it. So it wouldn't be a case where I would either dictate or they had to finish it for homework and then just leave it there? I would make sure they were aware of how I would benchmark if they've done it or not, is come back to class and ask them follow up questions which would then allow me to see who's done the homework but not so yes, presentations I would do almost dictated reading in a case that are almost sound like the audio book of it, which is a few of the lectures have heard me when I will be in the lectures office, they will say [name deleted] you should come do our audio books for all that of us. I was like okay. So I think that just also helps them to kind of follow along purely because what I'm doing through that is specifically obviously working in Pretoria and we do kind of have the language barrier of English and Afrikaans, specifically my game design students who are, I would say majority are Afrikaans speaking, at least with me dictating and them following along, and obviously, you're highlighting where they need, they are at least they're getting almost I would say the language right. So they're not when they're reading, they're not interpreting different things, or they're not pronouncing things different and getting the wrong word or anything. So that's I do that on purpose just to make sure they are, what they think the word is that they’re hearing, what the knowledge is that's being discussed. They're understanding it clear enough from someone that could actually dictate it to them. So that would be your presentations, and then definitely dictating, not just also with the textbook, like in game design, but with other modules where we would have articles that I would share with him, I say, hey, guys, let's just quickly read through this article. And then I would then use obviously, again, questions there. So what do you think about this? Does it make sense? Do you think that this could be important going forward? Do you think that there is a good approach going for the future of that discipline? You know, whatever questions it would be. So that that that was I would always say, as I said, I purposely did that to make sure that they're engaging with the content, because unfortunately, once we're out of class, I don't know if they're doing that [institute-specific program deleted] material, not because they are supposed to. But I kind of just I do it on purpose to make sure that going forward, I'm on this boat, we're all on the same page at the end of the day, and that no one is kind of left behind. So those would be, that's definitely the two the two approaches I have in terms of that theory, engagement and presentation of theory.

So you've said before and you said it now, again, when you’re busy with online classes, you do you do some q&a sessions? Do you find that students are engaging in that?

Not enough that I would hope for to be honest, you, I do end up sometimes, I did find this a lot in first semester, especially with first year groups, one of the first year groups that I had, actually, no I lie, I think with all the other groups that you end up talking to a brick wall sometimes. And I noticed with also the online facilitation, that it I would say might just be me, it could be a general consensus that it is it is difficult. And I'm not sure it's because the students obviously not in use of that environment. But it's almost it's almost because we'd obviously don't know what's happening behind the other end of the computer. If they're dozing off, they're falling asleep, not concentrating, or they're just shy and scared of being in a digital environment. That as I say, you would ask a question, and you would sit, then you hear crickets in the background kind of thing. And I would say, then, what I would try and do then is then I would try and kind of start answering the question. And then what I've said, then ask them, What does, what do you think of that? Does that make sense? And then you would start getting a few yeses and noes or maybe other answers in the chat. But you wouldn't get the whole class answering, it would only be those few students that would actually just bite the bullet and participate. So I would say, yeah, so in summary, I would say it is it's a very it's a very, I would say, mysterious problem that I have picked up on. And that I do feel that there is something in terms of the psychology or in trying to understand the students in terms of what in what way can we get online working for them? If such were to even you know, what, if online had to be a permanent thing, then what? And I think you would almost have to create a whole new form of education, if you will, or grant or foundation of education just purely for online facilitation that you could almost replicate a face to face online. But yeah, I think obviously, I it's, as I said, it was also my first time doing it this year, and I think obviously last year, the students obviously probably had their first time doing online and I think it was they were they were thrown into big, big ocean with a small fish kind of thing. Again, and yeah, it was it was really I would say it was really challenging navigating the online sessions. It was really difficult.

Yeah, no, that's I'm getting that across the board. Um, okay, then you say that sometimes in the online sessions, you give some personal real life experience that you share your own journey. And you also, okay, let's start with that. So you share your own journey, what is the aim of doing that?

So what I purposely bring that in purely so that students actually kind of see a bigger picture outside of the education space that we're in, the learning environment. That they're not just seeing me as someone that is trying to teach them what they need to know and kind of the knowledge that needs to go forward that is prescribed or that is set. But bringing by bringing in that kind of personal experience and you know, sharing skill and knowledge based on the content we're covering it almost just open, I feel that it would open the students’ eyes a bit more, almost give them that wow factor, but also just to kind of appreciate more why they are learning what they're being taught. That it's not just the case that you're just learning to get, or just having to know the stuff to get the degree at the end of the day, but to give them that practical, practical examples bringing across so that they can kind of gauge where they could see themselves using the knowledge that they're learning in class into the working world. So they could, they kind of, I bring those example in purely so they can see okay, okay, this makes sense. I see now why we learning this. Okay, maybe this is where the industry is growing, maybe this is where I need to focus on. When like, when you get to third year, maybe this is where the industry is I need to be here. So I purely do that, it's more of an almost as extended learning that they not, it's not just textbook, work in theory, and just learning and applying and doing the project to get your degree at the end of the day, but it's to allow them purely to just appreciate what they're learning a bit more. Because that is what the working world is going to expect or what the world is going to be like once they're finished. That they know exactly where their knowledge and skill set is going to be integrated and applied.

Then you also mentioned a whiteboard tool. Can you explain to me what that is?

So on [institute-specific program deleted], the whiteboard is purely a digital version of a physical whiteboard that you have where you can write notes, you can make doodles, I don't think there's sticky note capability, but other software would have such. Where purely that it's not just, obviously you can set it up that it's not just you using the whiteboard that restricts students from putting up answers. But you have things such as doodles, you have shapes, you can have text function, or text functionality or text boxes, where you purely just then it's kind of a using that as a collaborative effort to allow students just to, you know, get to see each other's answers, everyone's having to participate, rather than just purely asking through chat. And people answering the chatboard that that whiteboard, I would say, just to go back to the previous kind of question was, I think more effective as a tool than actually just letting them either open their microphones or kind of putting in chat. There's just obviously something about having it on a big screen and typing what they want, and putting it in different colors, and big sizes, and all that that everyone kind of just gets to see. I think it's it's more of a central thing, rather than seeing a little 20% of your screen with a little chat thing where you see 80% of it in big bright, everyone sharing their thoughts. That's what it really is, it's just a case, or I use it purely as a collaborative tool to allow, you know, more kind of a better way of engagement, that then allows the students to kind of feel more free and open to sharing their thoughts. Because I think what helps them do that is they know they're not going to be the only answer on the board, everyone's going to see it. So they don't feel like scared of thinking they might be stupid for what they're about to say or sounding stupid, because they've got the answer wrong completely. It's just they almost have a bit more free will. So yeah, as I said it was a it's a weird thing. But that white board purely was purely because of that to give them that kind of another way of form of engagement, to give their opinions share their thoughts or thinking so that I could see it, but also their classmates could see it and they almost then allows them to benchmark with each other, kind of bounce off each other and see from there.

Then lastly, you talked about breakaway rooms. And you said that you put students into groups and they go into these breakout rooms, and then you would actually visit each group and help them as a as a group. So not as the full class, but as little groups.

Yes.

How do you find, do you find that that works well?

So I would say based on the ones the sessions I have done, we have included that approach. It's still in its infant phase from obviously being the first year but what I can say that I did pick up was I was able to get more feedback out of those breakaway groups, then having them all in an entire group as a session. I felt that so as I said, compared to having on screen, you're just answering the class openly to the class question and expecting answers, having them more in a group where they're now collaborating, and they feel it's almost this, you know, there's less of them, the engagement would be a lot more. And as much, as I said, we've got to look at the psychology, I don't know, if it's there’s a case that they just feel that now that they're in a smaller group, they feel more responsible, or they feel more entitled. Or that it's purely just a case that there is a smaller group now to open up to rather than trying to that, you know, probably the paranoia of embarrassing themselves within the whole class. So I did find that when I did join in on the sessions, and they would do their [institute-specific task deleted] or these activities that were purely set for group work in those breakaway sessions. As soon as I joined in, you heard all of them talking, they wouldn't know that I'm there because I would have my mic muted. And I will just wait a few minutes and I'd be out almost would shock myself. I would be, wow, you guys are talking a lot more together, than, it's almost like you don't need me, I should just give you the work you come in for and I'll answer [unclear] my questions later. So although it's as I say it was in its kind of infant phase, for me, I have picked up that the students tend to be a lot more engaging. And they tend to be a lot more active in those breakaway sessions, that in comparison to having them in the main room or as, as the as the class group together. I would say that.

Do you tend to make the groups have a specific size?

Yes. So I would typically, obviously, depending you are not going to do the whole class online or when they had these sessions. But I would break it up to the case where I would look at okay, what would be the total? And I think I'll remember I think the most I've had groups would be four or five in a group. Yeah, about four or five in a group.

Okay, now moving on to the campus learning so face to face. It seems to me like the majority of your time face to face is spent in the classroom, but the students are in their groups, so pre-assigned groups, and they’re working mostly on their assessments.

Correct.

And then you as the educator would then consult with each group to guide them and to help them if they have any questions.

That is correct.

Why do you not use your face to face question uhm sessions for theoretical learning?

So the reason behind that so if I were to take, if I look back on the modules for the semester, the reason I do it, the main reason I do it is to ensure that they're getting the work done because and this is something, you know, just to give kind of insight into why I'm glad I've done it is because I've noticed when we're not, when they're outside of the classroom, they don't make time together outside of campus to work together on their project. So they end up just not making progress, so it's almost the only time that they get to work is when I allowed them to do it. Then the second reason that's based on the first one is purely that when it came to specifically, if I go back with the game design first years for example as the as the example, pretty much all the theory I did cover we had to cover for you know, this year was pretty much already done in first semester and in the theory that was required for thIS semester you only we only needed smaller sessions for it. So it was a case that when it came to structuring the the the program for the semester for that core or that module, it was a case that there was a lot more time for having these sit down face to face consultations, sharing, bouncing things off, purely because there was only so much theory to cover. And that could be covered in these sessions. Again, to answer the question, why I don't do the theory in those sessions is I feel, and it would based on what I've already said, is it was a case that the time would be best suited for allowing them to work. But the approach that I took was, is a practical approach in the sense that getting them to learn through doing, rather than just taking the theory and then letting them get on with it. Whereas I now use those purposely use those online sessions to do the theory, where I would come back into the class, we might discuss some of the theory, but now start putting it into practice, and then learn by doing and then seeing - alright, have you? I could then see in class when they bring the prototypes or their drawings and sketches and made brainstorming all that I could sit down and see, that would allow me to see right have you and have you understood something as a group, or have you not understood it? And then start making suggestions - okay, no, this shouldn't be here. You've misunderstood this, let's talk about this again. And it would be that case of where I was purely applying the, the learn-by-doing but the kind of giving, I would almost, in a way I would bring the I would bring the theory back in but not obvious, it would be kind of you know, it would support my justifications and arguments on them. So I would actually use the theory that we've discussed in class to backup my feedback in a way to say, well, have you thought about Alexander's rules of board architecture, for example, because they're doing board games. And they would understand the layout, and they would consider this. So we haven't considered that as long as if you consider this kind of thing. So it's almost using that the theory was covered. And then through that learning-by-doing and practical application of the theory, I would use a lot of what ifs to them, which, as I say, would be backed up by the theory, or have you considered this ones, if you do this, maybe this should be this instead. So I would use, as I said, if bringing that theory as a support maker that or supporting my arguments or rationale behind my suggestions, would just allow them to kind of just see things better, and put into perspective what they've learned, and allow them to consider, you know, give them the opportunity to consider that they really need to just bring understand the theory better, or they haven't considered it enough. And through that, they almost get that light bulb moment to say, ah you make sense or never thought of that. And I actually ended up having a lot of that, oh, that's a good point sir or that actually, I never thought about that. And then they'll be like, oh, wait, I like that idea. I like that idea. I like that approach. And it seems that they would learn, for me they picked up a lot better through that rather than then trying to teach the theory and then not then just sort of sign in and see what they do. It was a case, I bring the theory with me in terms of my support and feedback, etc, that I would give to them in class so they can actually see it. Almost it would get them to see it through someone that has the knowledge and skills and experience. But to kind of then see it, kind of put the theory into another perspective that they might understand it better. So that would be the pure, that would be purely though that would be my reasoning behind why I would do that approach.

As a concluding question, you have spoken about a lot of group work both in online and in face to face classes. What is the aim of using groups, so group so so a lot?

So, while purely with regards to industry right now, and the way we are working in what we know as the fourth industrial revolution right now, specifically in the creative fields and more specifically the design disciplines. Is there is a big or the direction of the industry is collaborate collaborative work or collaborative work. Where you're going to work in teams, you're not going to work as an individual. If you do it’s probably freelance work, but when you're working on big projects, you're typically going to work within the design team. You're going to be bouncing off ideas from each other. You are going to be relying on feedback from one another. You are going to be relying on a team to get projects done purely because each deliverable is a large scale was amounts on the on it in and of itself. So we also do that, I think it's not just me, I've picked it, we have worked through discussion and feedback with fellow lectures is and what our, what I've really picked up from how the [institute specific title deleted] has structured our core modules around it, is really to allow them to appreciate that more. Because what we have picked up, and this was even a problem when I was studying, is people just for some reasons, students don't like working in groups. And it's almost a case well, if we don't teach them now how to do it, then they're going to be behind and they're going to fail in industry, because they won't have the social skills, they won't have the people skills, they're not going to have the collaborative skills that they need or how to discuss and not feel isolated from a group or not feel, you know, appreciate enough or respect to within decision making, for example. So although that, I kind of advocate for it, it actually is part of the structure we have specifically at [name deleted], which I do appreciate and respect because of that is where the industry is right now. That is how the design industry works. And if we aren't doing it, then the students aren't going to learn. But purely what also, kind of in relation to that, why do we do it it was before, when it does come to the group focus projects where they do have to work in a group to provide a final project is - one, it's peer based learning. So they're actually learning from one another. And because you do will end up as, you will do that in industry, you're going to be relying on each other for feedback, you're going to be bouncing off each other's strengths and weaknesses. And you guys, you kind of got to think of it as you have, in order for an engine to work, you've got to have multiple cogs in it. And it's to get them to understand that they're all cogs in a machine, and that machine needs to, can only work when all those cogs are working together. But if I can also kind of just digress quickly. So for example, with my first year digital, second year digital , and third year digital, just the design group, they haven't done, apart from the [institute specific event deleted] that the first years and the second and third years did, whether the [institute specific event deleted] or [institute specific event deleted] that they did, primarily all their projects have been individual. And that's why I kind of, when we did have the small group activities, I made it purely for, I made it group, kind of little assessments to just get them to work within a group and understand that. But when I did structure, specifically in the first year digital design group, so when I did have them do the small based activities, I did it in a way that, so just to give you context, they were one of the briefs they had to have, there were four options in terms of clients that they had to design for, what I did, and they obviously had to do their brand research, etc. What I did then is I purely made groups of students that were working with the same brand, then they would then discuss their thoughts, opinions and observations of the brand and the research. So it was to almost get them to and see if you get the different opinions and observations. So they all kind of on the same page so that no one was kind of maybe confused and all that, so it was purely just to get them to work structures and structure primarily in a way that they would work with the same brand. They would all then eventually be on the same page by the end of the session. That they all understood the brand correctly, that they have same observation of the brand. But when it comes to for example, as I said the rest of the projects where they do work individually, there obviously is none of that collaborative or group based environment where they are purely relying on themselves and they're having to do kind of their work. Where that is then why I do have the little activities as group projects because other than that they're not getting that opportunity to get peer review or peer feedback. They're not getting peer based learning and not getting an opportunity to consider any form of team dynamics or collaborative dynamic to help them you know, get, as I said, develop those skills that they might need for collaborative work in industry. So yeah, though, that would be that would be the primary reason, as I said, the group work was there purely for peer based learning and feedback. But when it was not actually part of a project, I would still encourage it purely because of just allowing them those opportunities. But it would also give them this the opportunity to allow themselves to benchmark with each other rather than me trying to do it with every student, rather than let them do it together so that they are doing peer based learning rather than me trying to do it all with them.

Thank you, that’s the ned of my questions. I learned a lot from you, thank you so much. I appreciate your willingness to share your thoughts.