South Africa’s educational landscape is scarred with economic and educational inequalities. South African tertiary education today has to deal with a variety of challenges including the lack of funding, both on the student’s side and on the side of the institution. The most prominent challenge relevant to our research is the extensive lack of skills and knowledge of students when coming from secondary school where they are rarely exposed to cognitive skills. We present a case study of a drawing and animation project that aimed to facilitate this. We argue that through the integration of art theory and drawing practice, students came to understand not only how to detect critical thinking by other artists, but how to implement concepts, metaphors, or symbols in their own work. Through this project we explored drawing

• as a bridge to close the gap between theory and practice,
• as a tool for creative and critical thinking, and
• as a means to introduce technology on a basic (low-cost) level.

We found that our integrated approach narrowed the theory/practice gap and enhanced creative and critical thinking, resulting in student work of greater conceptual quality.
INTRODUCTION

The idea for this paper came out of a collaborative project run by two lecturers in the Fine art department at DUT. We both teach the same group of second year students. I teach drawing and Nirmi teaches art theory. In an attempt to break down a perceived divide between our two subjects we coordinated our efforts.

To distinguish between our two voices we use different fonts:

John: Franklin Gothic

Nirmi: Candara

Understanding the South African context is vitally important. We introduce the issues currently affecting education in our country. South Africa is a postcolonial country which displays all known symptoms of poverty, severe crime, corruption, extended cultural diversity, and language multiplicity. In addition, we are a young democracy, a country that comes out of a prolonged period of suppression and domination of the majority. This transformation from a racist society into a democratic one has been a slow and arduous one. Our extreme diversity in a cultural, religious and social context earned us the name ‘Rainbow Nation’, a challenge which asks for multifaceted attempts to ease tensions, inequity, inequality and discrimination. Issues that negatively affect the majority of students include the paralysing effects of poverty, a society in crisis, and an educational system that is largely dysfunctional. Poor matric standards and the overall poor situation of secondary education shifts the burden of ‘catching up’ and delivering a proper education to the universities (Parker 2012; Murray 2010; Davids 2010; Dugmore 2012; Pooe 2012;). Language constitutes an essential tool for learning, but

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1 Matriculation (matric) refers to the final year of high school and the qualification received on graduating from high school (Matriculation in South Africa, 2012).
because of its postcolonial history, the language of instruction is not the mother tongue of the majority of learners. And as non-indigenous languages are associated with an oppressed past, the issue is complex, politicized and problematic (Msila 2007; Seligmann 2011; Plessis 2005; Visser 2004;).

South African students are in general underprepared for tertiary education. They lack basic general knowledge, numeracy, critical skills and the necessary standard in the language of instruction. In order to correct and counteract this, and to prepare students for the 1st year level, most universities have put one year of so-called ‘bridging courses’ or ‘foundation courses’ in place. In our faculty the course unfortunately fails to address critical thinking, numeracy and writing.

According to Levy, the lack of money is the largest single problem for our higher education. At the same time higher education is the single largest inhibitor of reform programmes (1999). Public funding has decreased between 1986 and 2006 for higher education from 0.86% to only 0.66% of GDP (De Villiers, Steyn 2007). As the majority of our students come from a disadvantaged background, they need funding. 50% of the income of our university comes from the state and 36% from tuition fees (DUT annual report 2010). For many students fees become a stumbling block. The unrest through student strikes, which often become violent, are about fees and accommodation (Cops put DUT under surveillance 2010). Financial constraints have resulted in a low budget allocation for our department which does not allow for new equipment. Staffing has also been affected. The number of lecturers has steadily decreased to less than half in the last ten years while student numbers have remained constant.

The only thing that is not under-resourced is creativity.
The majority of our students arrive with only basic English language skills, and no culture of reading and self-study. Many of them are first generation tertiary students. This means that these qualities were not nourished at home. The general struggle with language, cognitive skills and the generating of one’s own ideas leads to a tendency to concentrate on techniques and practice as this is more rewarding. Students prefer practical subjects that avoid written assessments, the construction of arguments (in writing or in a debate) or other critical thinking skills. So the gap between theory and practice keeps widening. One of the aims of our intervention was to counteract this tendency. It is also of great concern in our current recurruculation process.

Contemporary art has moved away from a representational and aesthetic focus towards a conceptual one. This is a new territory for most of our students, who often are not even familiar with the technical side of producing art, or with the notion of ‘contemporary art’, as they never took art as a school subject. Most of our students therefore have a limited idea of what to expect from studying fine art. The perception of creating decorative and useful objects dominates. Fine art as a concept developed in the Western world is foreign to the Zulu culture, which has a rich tradition in craft. These products are useful and decorative and mostly embedded in a ritual context. The encounter with a conceptual approach is therefore not an easy one.

THE THEORY/PRACTICE GAP

The integration of theory and practice is an issue in various disciplines and has its roots probably in the invention of the university itself, originally the place to discover and understand the ‘theory’ behind (natural) phenomena. Today this
is called ‘research’. With rapidly growing technology, the demands on human resources have increased. We need to think on our toes, and solve complex problems that didn’t exist before. The crucial skill today is to find, understand and evaluate relevant information for one’s purpose. The values that stand out are those of information literacy, critical thinking, problem solving, reflection and cognitive skills. These skills are rooted in the ability to analyse, systemize and evaluate data, in other words, complex thought.

Theory driven university degrees are currently criticized for their lack of practical application, yet practice based courses, especially in art and design, have in turn, changed their curriculum towards a more theory oriented, cognitive approach. In fine art, the shift towards theory happened in the art production itself\(^2\), and through educational reform\(^3\) during the 1960’s (Candlin 2001)\(^4\). The trend deepened with postmodernism, which picked up on these beginnings and today contemporary art is deeply engaged within a conceptual mode (Stezaker 1997). Because of this radical shift away from focusing on teaching technical skills and the turn towards theory, art production was now imbedded 1.) within a critical discourse that creates a dialogue and 2.) within the grand narrative of its time and context. Yet this shift has been problematic for a variety of reasons.

The difficulty of integrating theory and practice raises various questions: why is it so difficult to integrate the two or even,\(^2\)

\(^{2}\) the most prominent movement being ‘conceptual art’

\(^{3}\) The National Advisory Council on Art Education (1960), better known as The Coldstream Report (in Great Britain)

\(^{4}\) South Africa had a time delay in this regard, and still tends to favour non-conceptual art. A correlation is possible.
why are the two separated in the first place? It also demands an answer to the question: what is it that we need to integrate, or, what do we hope to achieve through integration? Theory and practice are separated in our educational system, but in reality they are deeply interwoven. ‘Man cannot be in any kind of practical relationship towards the world, not even on a very primary and simple level, without some kind of ‘theory’, without certain purposes, attitudes, concepts, ideas’ says Vranicki. He concludes ‘… to separate them would be to allow the possibility of a kind of practice which did not include consciousness, hypotheses and theory: as if theory were possible which did not involve the total experience of man’s sensuous activity...Practice of this kind would be animal practice, and such a theory would be nonsense’ (1965).

Then, why did we end up separating the two? The reason lies in their different functions within the process of ‘problem solving’, - practical as opposed to factual. But it is the thinking that leads the way to the solution, not the doing. This separation of thinking and doing causes the problem. By separating the two, we are tempted to see them as not related, which is a fallacy. According to the philosopher Immanuel Kant theory deals with the principle, the rule that represents its universality (Allgemeinheit). This involves a process of abstraction from various conditions that influence the situation at any given time (practice). It is essential to extract a theory, because it constitutes the key to solving new problems (1977). At high school our students are not asked to apply theory to solve problems. They are trained to memorize and to learn by rote. But Kant makes it clear that ‘No-one can pretend to be practically versed in a branch of knowledge and yet treat theory with scorn, without exposing the fact that he is an ignoramus in his subject’ (1977).
In order to solve new problems, one needs to know the theory and how to apply it to a given practical situation. In order to do so, Immanuel Kant suggests an element of connection between the two (Mittelglied der Verknüpfung und des Übergangs) that of judgement, in order to transfer the theoretical principle to the practical situation (or problem) we want to solve. Rachels concludes: “This implies that those who lack judgement might be helpless” (2001). And this helplessness is what we observe and witness when teaching our students. They engage in ‘theory’, but are not able to apply or connect judgement to their practical subject in the studio. This inability explains why integration in education is so problematic; numerous research papers bear testimony to this. The tale reads almost like a mantra: students know the theory, but they struggle to implement it once they are confronted with the practice of their profession (Waghorn, Stevens 1996).

How do we assist with the process of critically reviewing what was learned in theory and applying such knowledge to the practice? Or, as Kant would put it: judging (Urteilskraft) a practical problem through the light of theory in order to find solutions and/or a new approach. One of the main barriers lies in the different structure of theory and practice. Art history for example is organized chronologically, whilst studio based practice is arranged along techniques and topics. This forces an asynchronous delivery of often related contents. Students often fail to make the connections.

Artists are visual people. According to Howard Gardner, they fall under the ‘spatial intelligence’ category, but are not necessarily talented in ‘linguistic intelligence’, the gift for language and words. Surely, if tested, all individuals show abilities in more than one ‘intelligence’ (as there are nine), though due to education, support and encouragement, we end up
specializing and concentrating on particular trades. Contemporary art clearly favours individuals who are strong in both spatial and linguistic intelligence, and who then, in addition can bring in other intelligences to refine their art.\(^5\) But if the talent or skill for language and words is lacking, such a person would struggle to succeed in a contemporary art school.

**ADDRESSING THE GAP THROUGH DRAWING**

In order to address these challenges we designed an intervention that combined theory and practice. A drawing project that investigated movement and animation was introduced during art theory periods and was linked to art historical precedents and art theoretical concepts. We both participated in the introduction to the project as well as the final critique of the work. Our project was an attempt to make students aware of what artist/researcher Barbara Bolt refers to as the ‘double articulation of theory and practice whereby theory emerges from a reflexive practice, and practice is informed by theory’ (2005:4). By combining drawing and art theory into one collaborative project we hoped to make this ‘double articulation’ evident to students.

In our experiment we coordinated the art history of ‘movement in modern art’ with the drawing module, which aimed to produce drawings that expressed ‘movement’.\(^6\) We also re-introduced the notion of a ‘concept’ in art, but this time in art theory, by showing art examples and discussing them, making it clear that the focus was on a practical outcome. We expected the students to come up with, implement and explain their own ‘concept’ in the artwork they were going to produce in the studio. The next step was then to ‘detect’ concepts in existing artworks of

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\(^5\) An artist with musical or bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence would probably chose performance art or installation, whereas an artist with existential intelligence would have a more philosophical approach.

\(^6\) The duration of the drawing module was one week with 2 x 3 hours of art theory during that week.
modernism within the theme, and identify metaphors and symbols, in other words, interpretation, an activity associated with art historians. But here the purpose was different: it was a means to train the budding artists to understand these principles in order to create meaning in their own artworks.

This shift towards integration was also reflected in the theory assignment. We focussed on the discussion of the concept, metaphors and symbols not only of an existing modernist work, but also (by comparison) of the student’s work inspired by modernism. The aim was to emphasize that the ‘only difference’ between theory and practice was the ‘direction’ in which the SAME task was executed: In art theory we investigated a finished artwork and detected how the artist had applied meaning to it and what that meaning was. In the studio practice the student tried to create an artwork by finding out what meaning could be applied.

In our department students have tended not to engage with drawing in a conceptual way. A solution to this deficiency presented itself to me serendipitously as a result of an intervention I tried three years ago with a particularly unmotivated group. Inspired by my own experience, I introduced them to animation. Using traditional drawing combined with basic computer software, the students produced short, stop-frame animated films. This project brought about a change in attitude and approach. There was a sense of excitement and total engagement in the studio. Drawing was seen as a means to an end. The ‘safe’ and representational approach to drawing was replaced by a more experimental and investigative one.

Students were encouraged to explore available technology as a creative tool. The technique of stop-frame animation using digital cameras or cell phones to record the stages of their drawings was introduced. Students were shown how to use Microsoft Paint and Windows Moviemaker as editing tools. This meant that they could work in the open access computer lab or on their laptop or home computer (if they had one). The animation project served as an introduction to the potential of digital technology. Through spontaneous
sharing and teamwork, students began to understand and exploit this potential. The limited resources meant that students had to be innovative and experimental in the way they incorporated technology. Most students preferred to work with traditional drawing media rather than computer drawing software. By recording their drawings digitally students were able to reflect on the process of developing a concept through drawing. The final editing and production of the videos required teamwork and skill sharing. Adding sound to their videos was an option that provided scope for further creativity.

FIGURE 1 KOKETSO LETLAPE, 2012. DRAWING FOR ANIMATION.

FIGURE 2 KOKETSO LETLAPE, 2012. DRAWING FOR ANIMATION.
FIGURE 3 STUDENTS EDITING ANIMATION VIDEOS.

FIGURE 4 CELL PHONE USED FOR STOP FRAME ANIMATION.
To reinforce the idea that drawing can act as medium to integrate theory and practice, the project was presented as a joint assignment with art theory. Results indicate that the exposure to art historical precedents and complex concepts led to drawings that were technically and conceptually more adventurous, and the perceived gap between theory and practice was narrowed.
FIGURE 7 ZINHLE KUMALO, 2012. *MOVEMENT INSTALLATION*, FOUND OBJECT, THREAD AND CHARCOAL DRAWINGS ON PAPER, DIMENSIONS VARIABLE.

FIGURE 8 KIMERA APPALASY, 2012. *IT’S A DOG’S WORLD*, INSTALLATION WITH INK DRAWINGS ON PAPER, DIMENSIONS VARIABLE.
Students keep a cognitive–reflective journal for every module where they relate information, ideas and concepts gained through theoretical research directly to their practice. In addition the journal encourages daily writing, which assists with the development of writing skills -a challenge many students face. Journal entries show that the student response to integration was positive. In many cases concepts and examples discussed during art theory provided inspiration for students to develop their own concepts through drawing.

The students were introduced to examples of Futurist art. Siyanda Xaba found their depiction of movement to be ‘what one would expect under the subject of movement’.

*I came up with an idea of doing a series of drawings using facial expression and I even told John that I could focus on that. It wasn’t much of a strong concept. It was more of illustration, as I told John, I saw it in his eyes that he wasn’t that satisfied, so I got worried and started to try to think of another solution* (Xaba 2012).

His inspiration came from a Bill Viola video shown to the students during art theory.

*My idea was to move away from the ordinary classical movement e.g. moving by walking from one point to another, but my idea is about movement in terms of EMOTIONS. I used the topic in order to find my concept behind it which is searching for IDENTITY. That was my idea and the only thing that made me to get ...closer to my concept was the movie that Nirmi played, which was about 5 people showing movement of facial expression as well as slow, gradual movement of body* (Xaba 2012).
Sibonelo Ndwalane integrated ideas taken from the life drawing class with ideas from art theory.

I've started my drawing which should depict movement. I've decided to use what I learned in figure drawing depicting movement, and also I have looked at Muybridge and Duchamp’s works and sort of combined the two into one piece.

I am using Duchamp’s drawing depicting movement with a horse and a man riding and Muybridge’s man climbing steps. I think the combination of charcoal and oil pastels should work (Ndwalane 2012).
FIGURE 10 BONGANI KHANYILE, 2012. *LIFE DRAWING*, CHARCOAL ON PAPER, 594 X 420 MM.

FIGURE 11 SIBONELO NDWALANE, 2012. *BURDEN*, PASTEL ON PAPER, 300 X 650 MM.
Students were asked to develop their own concepts related to movement and animation. Koketso Letlape’s concept evolved out of a series of doodles done in response to ideas presented during art theory lectures.

More doodles done during art theory. I’m really keen to experiment with the pendulum. The lines of the pendulum shifting (or the after shadow) must be as light as possible. So the main event will happen in the middle. This is as much mathematical as it is art. I want to show the mechanics of time as much as I want to show the movement of time within the pendulum shift (Letlape 2012).

He linked the seven stages of his pendulum movement to the seven deadly sins, and further linked these to animal symbols.

In my work the pendulum will explain or give the impression of a movement in time and situation or character. Characteristics I myself show during my lifetime as a human. With the seven pendulum balls or circles a characteristic will be shown.... (Letlape 2012).
In both art theory and drawing students were encouraged to think critically. Siyanda Xaba reflected on how to improve his work:

*Look and think cognitively, don’t go for the obvious.*

*To obtain brilliant ideas question myself about my ideas, whether they work and how to make them better. Don’t look for a solution, but rather question and try to solve things and break them to simplicity (Xaba 2012).*

In art theory we presented and discussed new material such as the Enlightenment and Descartes. These ideas challenged students from religious and conservative backgrounds. Siyanda Xaba acknowledges this challenge.

*My work is about existence and it questions existence in some way. In the world that we live in there are many influences and things that make us reason and when we reason we sort of become confused of where we belong or what to follow.*

*So basically all of these confusions are all unclear and makes a person like me to not know where I stand in life ‘existence’. So in my art I try to show that ‘unclearness’ through my movement drawings. What I did was I made drawings showing a blurred effect which clarifies confusion and unclearness and that was the kind of effect I intended to capture (Xaba 2012).*
Many of our students were not familiar with the concept of metaphor. In art theory they learned to look for visual metaphors in the works of other artists. Nosipho Myeza was finding her feet through metaphor.

My concept was inspired by the fact that everyone’s life seems to be logical and rational and controlled by systems and laws to such an extent that they cannot identify or find their true selves or true sense of identity, which of course can also make them forget what it feels like to be experimental.

Execution of my conceptual idea:

For my concept I will document a movement of feet that find their way into shoes of different pairs to express my way of defying what is considered to be normal or rather breaking out of the laws and systems that govern our life.

Symbolic Representation

The feet are a metaphor for a person that finds his/her own feet, which in this case is being experimental.

The two different shoes – represent being experimental, spontaneous and breaking out from the comfortable way of living which is guided by laws and systems (Myeza 2012)
FIGURE 15 NOSIPHO MYEZA, 2012. DRAWING FOR ANIMATION.

FIGURE 16 NOSIPHO MYEZA, 2012. HAPPY FEET, CHARCOAL AND PASTEL ON PAPER, 594 X 420 MM.
Sibonelo Ndwalane made drawings of himself carrying a bag around signifying the high expectations placed on him. He wanted to express the challenges he experienced as a first generation tertiary student in his family.

*I am using the baggage/bags as my metaphorical object which is intended to signify a feeling of having a burden (Ndwalane 2012).*

**FIGURE 17** SIBONELO NDWALANE, 2012. JOURNAL ENTRY, 297 X 210 MM.

**FIGURE 18** SIBONELO NDWALANE, 2012. DRAWING FOR ANIMATION.
Many students drew on their own life experiences, confronting issues of identity and personal development. Others expressed ideas that indicated a concern for broad social issues that affected their lives. Siyanda Xaba’s drawings and animation are an expression of his personal quest for a sense of who he is.

My concept is searching for identity through emotional movement in terms of facial expression. I wanted the viewer to see me as a person moving from a certain stage to another through facial expression, e.g. starting from a happy or should I say a normal depiction of myself, to a very confused and lost person.

I try to achieve my soul searching identity by starting showing me as a happy person and as it moves on I begin to change mood and become a different person as it continues until it reaches the point where I become a confused person who doesn’t know himself (Xaba 2012).

FIGURE 19 SIYANDA XABA, 2012. SELF PORTRAIT, CHARCOAL AND PASTEL ON PAPER, 594 X 420 MM.
Similarly Bongani Khanyile wanted to depict a sense of hope and the development of an individual identity.

My idea is to depict different scenes of my timeline life. I am going to begin my animation from nothing to something visible and take into action with movement a life observation, trying to remember a certain age frame and to show movement in the actions of motion that came toward me and that I approached and how did they effect or had an impact on my life (Khanyile 2012).

Nhlananipho Ndimande’s city drawings express his concerns about the challenges facing his generation.

In the city that I live in life is very tough, it is in a fast lane... Considering the events that take place now and then, the ongoing circle of crime rate, the abusive usage of drugs which lead to brothers and sisters to kill each other...Drugs are destroying the youth every day, their future, they are driven by the longing to belong and understand who they are (Ndimande 2012).
One of the aims of our intervention was to make students aware of the value of research both in a theoretical and in a practical context. Students clearly began to value research as a tool for helping them develop creative ideas. Siyanda Xaba wrote:

Research is important and serves as a foundation for work and I’ve realised this through searching information myself and thinking cognitively. At times Ideas or Concepts don’t appear imminently (immediately), they take a process of research and questioning as well as thinking cognitively (Xaba 2012).
The movement and animation projects were aimed at getting the students to view drawing as a process through which concepts can be developed and expressed. Bongani Khanyile found the drawings of Clara Liev who uses a technique of blurring or agitating the edges of her figures to suggest movement. He experimented with this technique and used it to develop his concept of movement. His comment indicates that he worked instinctively, responding to his medium.

I was still working on this piece, I am wondering how it is going to look like in the end. I don’t want to know. All I’m interested in is to experiment more with my medium (Khanyile 2012).

Siyanda Xaba reflected on his own process of drawing:

When I was drawing there was one thing that kept on ringing in my mind and that was: every mark that I make was a history. This idea made me to not have the perception of making a perfect drawing without mistakes but I let the hand flow, creating lines that ended up shaping my work (Xaba 2012).
Students were encouraged to develop an innovative attitude. They were dropped in the deep end and had to find solutions to a variety of conceptual and practical problems. Limited resources led to the need to ‘make a plan’ and they coped well. Jabulani Mbili reflected on his struggle with equipment and technology.

In this module as I started I had a challenge of getting the equipment which I needed to use which is a camera and a tripod but I made a plan...As I was starting to draw with charcoal on paper I did not have any knowledge on how I would make my drawings work as animation. But when I started taking pictures it became easy for me to progress with my animation and I had a clear vision of how it would be at the end. Which gave me more ideas and how to do other complex drawings in order to improve my animation (Mbili 2012).

Student response indicates that there was a sense of enjoyment, achievement and pride at the end of the project.

Nhlanipho Ndimande:

I enjoyed doing animation, and I was pleased by the outcome of my work, because at first I couldn’t understand what I was doing and I wasn’t sure of how to do it, but not until I relaxed and let my hand flow onto paper freely (2012).

Jabulani Mbili:

This was a successful module which was challenging in approach and ideas it was a learning experience as I learned how to make animation and challenges which came with animation... (2012).

Siyanda Xaba:

I am proud of what I’ve achieved personally. I know that I worked hard because I did over a thousand drawings if I am not mistaken, in a space of just three days and I think that is an achievement in itself (2012).

The student responses indicate that their creative and critical thinking skills were stimulated and enhanced. In addition there was evidence of a deeper understanding of the nature of drawing itself and the skills required to execute it. Howard Risatti, in a Theory of Craft, points out the difference between the knowledge and skills required for craft and
fine art. He explains that the aim of figure drawing is not so much to master a technique but to see and understand the figure as a form in space so that it can be conceptualised as a two-dimensional or three-dimensional sign. The conceptualising nature of drawing means that the knowledge gained through drawing can be applied to almost any other medium (2007).

There is some debate as to whether or not the act of drawing is a form of thinking. Artist Joel Fisher’s paper Notes Towards a Prepositional Drawing given at the Drawing Research Network Conference, London, 8 October 2009, addresses the relationship between drawing and thinking. He concludes that drawing is related to, but differs from thinking.

*Drawing is like thinking, but not what we might call a ‘mode of thought.’ It is too multifaceted to be proposed as a single system or lens able to give us a specific understanding of the world* (Fisher 2009).

Patricia Cain in *Drawing: The enactive evolution of the practitioner* explains why she chose to focus on the activity of drawing for her research. The immediacy of the activity lends itself to the direct and unencumbered expression of visual ideas. There are no complicated technical intermediaries that stand between the artist and what he/she wants to express. She notes that drawings provide a unique form of access to the thoughts of the artist and that the activity of drawing has been defined as a ‘cognitive tool to facilitate and assimilate information’ (2010: 28).

To engage students in the quest to find a concept for their new project, is probably the main focus in the studio, alongside the technical realization of the work. The process demands a critical view into one’s subjective world in relation to the objective, outside world. This is where art theory can assist, as it trains information literacy to help gather ideas, as well as the cognitive skills required for the task.
Drawing, as well as other forms of visual expression, provides a means of generating knowledge that differs from language-based knowledge generation. Author of *Art Practice as Research*, Graeme Sullivan refers to this as ‘thinking through a medium’ (2010). Thinking through the medium of drawing is a different form of cognitive process to what is normally considered as thinking in academia. Academic thinking requires competence in language, more particularly academic language. Linear, logical, language-based thinking is often of less use when drawing than instinctive, innovative and ‘creative’ decision-making. Our assumption was that a more critical engagement with art theory would impact positively on studio practice. Conversely a more critically reflective approach to practice would lead to a better understanding of theoretical concepts. Students have begun to engage with concepts in art theory and develop concepts through drawing, bringing about a deeper and more critical understanding of the ‘concept in art’.

Through our collaboration we emphasised the educational and creative potential of new technology. Many of our students have little or no computer literacy when they come to us. In art theory the use of e-learning has made technology an integral part of the syllabus and gives students the tools they need to succeed in the working environment of the 21st century. The 24/7 accessible learning material and instructions of the classroom assist the student centred learning approach. Even though the majority of our students do not own laptops, the majority do have digital devices such as smartphones, i-pods, and digital cameras. One of the reasons for the popularity of the drawing and animation project was the link to new technology, which students considered ‘cool’.

**CONCLUSION**

Our collaborative teaching experiment was a response to the perceived gap between art theory and practice in a South African tertiary art school context. We looked at various factors that brought about this perception and presented a possible solution through a drawing and animation project. Our hypothesis was that drawing could become a means to close the theory/practice gap. We found that despite our demanding expectations students were comfortable with the integrated approach. The integration made sense to them, therefore the response was positive, leading to a more critically and conceptually aware
approach to drawing. The attitude to both subjects changed beneficially. Student feedback supports the following findings:

- Ideas and concepts presented in art theory were integrated into drawing.
- Critical thinking was evident in both art theory and drawing.
- Students began to think through the medium of drawing.
- Students began to use metaphor as a means of expressing concepts in their own drawings.
- Personal and social concerns were linked to concepts developed through drawing.
- There was evidence of an innovative approach to drawing.

By emphasising its conceptual and cognitive aspects, drawing became an effective means of bridging the perceived gap between theory and practice. Concepts dealt with in art theory were explored through drawing and then developed in the other practical disciplines. Thus we encouraged students to develop visual thinking skills through drawing as a means of generating and expressing concepts in relation to both theory and practice. The improved standard of drawings, together with the generally positive feedback, indicates that we were successful in our aim.

This project marks the beginning. There is scope for further development. Potential spinoffs include the integration of all subjects offered. Our aim is to bring all the practical subjects closer together conceptually by structuring a fully integrated course.

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