

Using the ABC storyboarding method to redesign modules for blended learning: Expectations, experience and evaluation

In 2020, many higher education practitioners faced the challenge of moving teaching online at short notice. To facilitate this process at the University of Greenwich, a module storyboarding method derived from ABC learning design (Young & Perovic, 2016) was used to help module leaders plan the delivery of their modules and consider the challenges and affordances of this 'pivot'.

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Introduction

This poster showcases the experiences of facilitators and practitioners across a set of module design workshops which enabled participants to redevelop their module for online or blended learning. These workshops used Diana Laurillard's 'Six Learning Types' (commonly known as 'ABC Learning Design') to create a visual 'storyboard' for workshop participants that showed what students were doing, week by week, on their module. They then reflected on the balance of learning activities and the student's journey, as well as the use of digital tools.

Participants completed a pre-workshop survey in which they chose their signature pedagogies from the six learning types as well as rating particular digital tools in terms of usefulness for that pedagogy. We have conducted semi-structured interviews with participants up to a year after they attended the workshop to gauge the workshop's impact over the 2020-21 academic year.

Expectations

Facilitator Expectations

Design of the structured workshop went through three stages:

1. Ideation

What's the nature of the workshop? Is the process participant-led or facilitator-led? What outcomes can/should we deliver within 1.5 hours? What would be a sustainable outcome?

2. Prototyping

We tested several tools for online storyboarding: Cacao, Realboard, Microsoft Whiteboard, Learningdesigner & PowerPoint. We used the last one in the end for flexibility & familiarity. We also tested the methodology in several disciplines including biology & a PGcert in HE.

3. Re-ideation and implementation

Going through the above two stages, we revised our expectations and decide our workshops to demonstrate the following characteristics:

- A strong 'end in mind' approach with defined outputs;
- Focusing on differences participants want to make;
- A sustainable approach, using a pre-workshop survey to assess their needs & providing follow-up support.
- A mix of synchronous & asynchronous facilitation, offering some live workshops & others support with completing the materials in their own time and pace.

Participant Expectations

Initial participant questions/ responses included:



Tell me what tools I should use and how?

How can I deliver my content online?

How to design the layout of my Moodle site?

I'm surprised I'm the only one here! Why 1:1?

I want to use an online whiteboard in my module but don't know where to start.

How can I transfer face-to-face activities online?

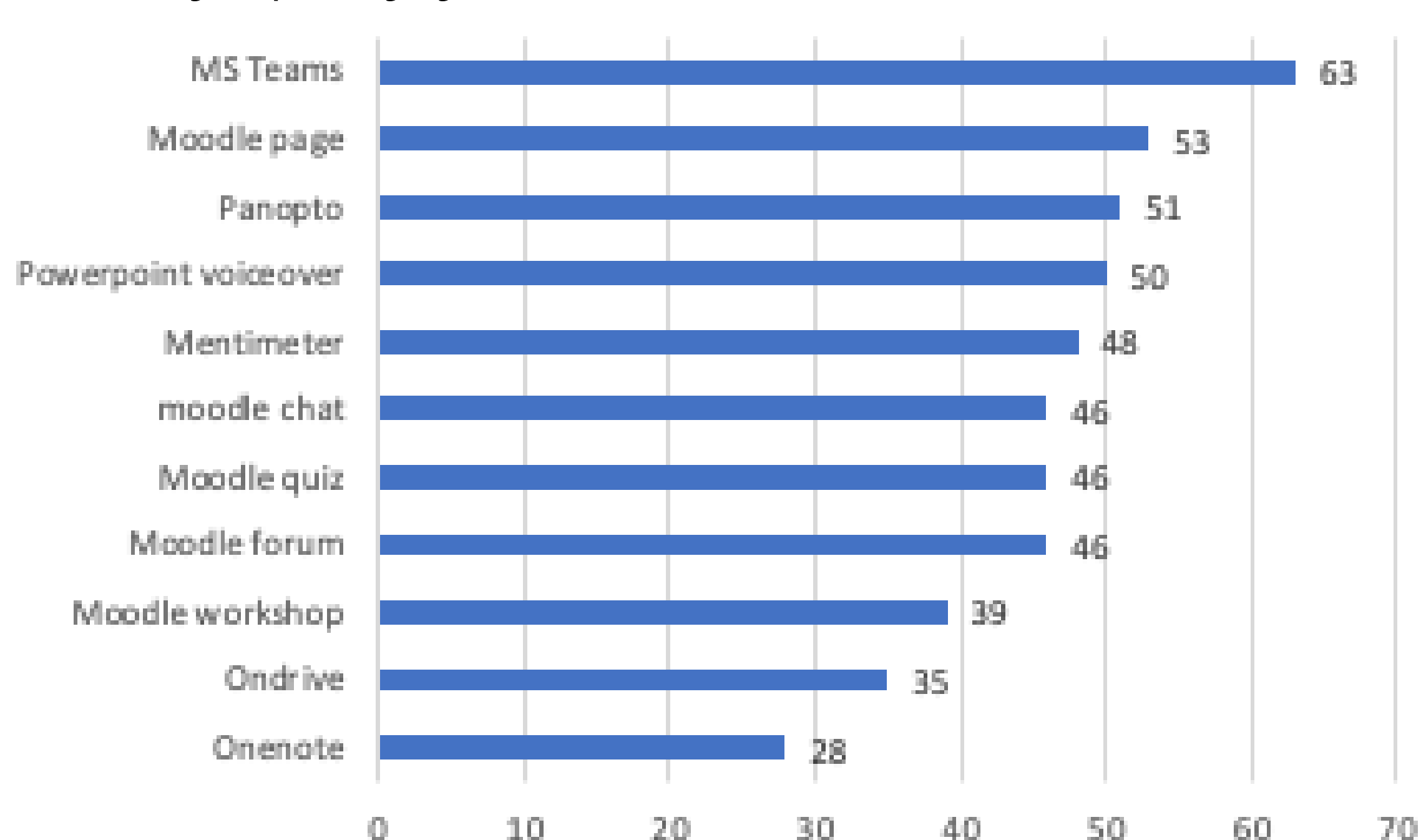
I already know what I want to do I just signed up to see what this workshop could offer me.

Pre-workshop survey results

Participants' self-chosen "signature pedagogies":



Participants' choice of university-supported learning technologies, according to pedagogical relevance:



Experience

Facilitator Experience

The experience of delivering this workshop confounded several of our initial expectations. We had advertised the workshop would:

1. Storyboard existing pedagogical approaches using the six learning types
2. Specify design of learning activities and identify appropriate tools.

Instead, we found the discussion **began with descriptions of learning activities**. Participants narrated their module directly to us: building the storyboard in PowerPoint, we offered or selected the learning types, reflecting their description back to them through the lens of the six types.

Where participants **did use** the learning types it was often **after the storyboarding**: for example, adding activities of a particular type to address a perceived imbalance across the module.

Participants also asked us for help classifying existing activities, using the six types to **make sense of their practice**.

The visual spread of the storyboard helped participants **reflect on the student journey, movements between stages of a module** and the **accumulation of knowledge or skills** along the way.

After the storyboarding workshop, participants seemed to **feel more confident in articulating the rationale** of the module to their students, as well as articulating **why students should engage** and the potential benefits.

As facilitators, we helped participants **localise the framework of the six learning types within their own discipline**. For example, 'discussion' may look different, and require different design, in different disciplines.

Participant Experience

Participants reported positive experiences during the workshop:

'thanks for the workshop this morning, I am buzzing!'

'looking at [...] what bit of the module are they acquiring information in, right? what bit of the module is discussion? what bits should be investigation [...] really informed [my module design]'

'It was really refreshing and enlightening'

'it was useful to have somebody else to kind of, who knew the six categories really well, to take the lead on that [...] I was talking, you knew what category that would fit into. And it helped me understand it a little bit more cos I was getting a bit mixed up between them'

'I didn't know until seeing it visually, the way the storyboard looks with the colour coding, it just helps you see straight away what the balance looks like'

Evaluation

Facilitator Evaluation

We realised that we **tried to do too much** in the session & rarely managed to storyboard the whole term.

However (see quote on collaboration below) we found the session prompted many to **reflect further**. Some participants even sent us completed storyboards or asked for advice on further design ideas after the session.

We have also learned the potential of having an **audience** for the workshops. We piloted several workshops with **whole departments** and they stimulated department members to **produce their own storyboards** (which we then gave feedback on).

Reflecting on the design & participant comments, we considered the **gap between theory and practice**. For example, many participants planned discussion, but **good discussion requires active facilitation: did we emphasise this sufficiently in the session?** A strength of the storyboard - the overview it gives - can also be its weakness when practical details are overlooked.

Participant Evaluation

Participants commented on the longer-term impact of the workshop on their practice:

'more than half of what's here I've used in the real thing, that was launched in September, a couple of months after we had the session.'

'I would have thought in my head collaboration would be all over[...] In the first bit it wasn't, so that's something that I changed'

'[the workshop] has made all the difference in understanding the transition from content-led teaching to learning-led teaching'

Conclusion & ways forward

We found **theory did not always translate to practice**, & the storyboarding process assumes student engagement and self-motivation. This points to the need for design workshops to **build in questions** such as 'how will you know students are doing [learning type]?' that encourage a focus on practice. Could our design process more successfully 'bridge theory and practice' (Beetham & Sharpe, 2013)?

Participants commented that students struggled to form learning communities online, which affected discussion & collaboration in particular. We plan to investigate whether the coming **return to campus** impacts this.

References

Beetham, H., & Sharpe, R. (2013). An introduction to rethinking pedagogy. In *Rethinking pedagogy for a digital age* (pp. 25-36). Routledge.

Young, C., & Perović, N. (2016). Rapid and creative course design: as easy as ABC. *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 228, 390-395.