

# Dealing with a Change in Teaching Mode in Uncertain Times

Few of us probably anticipated the academic disruption that we would face during the COVID-19 pandemic. To ensure that no student is left behind, we created two pathways, one involving more digital or online LT and the other more intensive LT when students return to campus. Among the variety of changes thrust upon us, the one that lecturers are grappling with at present is how to teach and facilitate learning online. While learning some of the strategies and approaches to online teaching is important, it is as important to come to grips with your feelings and thoughts about the changed that is required of you.

Many of us are familiar with putting learning activities on our Moodle module sites. But these are an adjunct to the face-to-face teaching that we do. Very few of us have taught a fully online module. We are thus probably somewhat apprehensive, anxious and uncertain how we are going to manage and navigate this moment of great change.

Below are some of Nelson Mandela's quotes that might give us some insights into how to work through the discomfort of changing from what we know well, contact teaching, to what we don't have much experience with, online teaching.

## 1. Change is difficult and starts with yourself

"One of the most difficult things is not to change society — but to change yourself". Nelson Mandela by Himself, 2011, p.52. Johannesburg: Pan Macmillan South Africa.

Change starts when **you decide to work on yourself** instead of blaming others or the coronavirus for the fact that you have to teach online now.

"As I have said, the first thing is to be honest with yourself. You can never have an impact on society if you have not changed yourself". Nelson Mandela. Accessed from: <https://succeedfeed.com/nelson-mandela-quotes/>



**Being honest with yourself** about what you are feeling and thinking is an important first step to embracing change. To do this you could:

- Give yourself time to come to terms with how you feel and think about the change that your face.
- Focus on what you can control and accept what is beyond your control.
- Set realistic expectations for yourself as you adapt to online teaching and learning facilitation.
- Access your support networks (friends, family, etc.) even if the access is virtual. A support network can assist you to share your feelings and frustrations.
- Seek professional help when needed. You can access professional help via telephonic/electronic/online platforms.

## 2. Change requires action

“Action without vision is only passing time, vision without action is merely day dreaming, but vision with action can change the world”. Nelson Mandela. Accessed from <https://www.wamda.com/2013/12/6-inspiring-quotes-entrepreneurs-nelson-mandela>

In times of great uncertainty, such as we face at present, we sometimes struggle to take action until we have greater certainty. Take a risk and get going even when you are not 100% sure that you are doing the right thing. Remember you do not have to get it perfectly right the first time; but you must get going. Do not overthink things; you might just become stuck.

## 3. It takes courage to change

“I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it... The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.” Nelson Mandela by Himself, 2011, p.67. Johannesburg: Pan Macmillan South Africa.

You have to find ways to pluck up the courage to embrace the change that is required of you. It takes a lot of **positive self-talk**, such as “I can do this” or “this has to be done”, to move forward courageously as you start making the shift to online teaching.

**Be patient.** It takes time to learn how to adapt to teaching online. The changes you need to make to how you teach and facilitate learning are not easy. Your confidence and courage will grow as you become more familiar with how online teaching works.

**Courage inspires others.** When you authentically and courageously step into uncertain spaces, colleagues and students are inspired and motivated to follow suit.

## 4. We need to keep the big picture in mind but “shrink” the change required of us

“You can start changing our world for the better daily, no matter how small the action”. Nelson Mandela. Accessed from: <https://succeedfeed.com/nelson-mandela-quotes/>

Our big, common goal is for all students to achieve their learning outcomes and complete the 2020 academic year. A significant part of making this happen requires us to employ online and remote teaching, which is a very daunting task. In fact, it is quite overwhelming and may feel as if it is an impossible to achieve as we think of all the implications of successfully delivering online teaching. However, by setting ourselves small, realistic goals and achieving them, we will start realising that we can master online teaching and learning facilitation. We can start small by focusing on the core aspects of our modules, an activity that can assist students to achieve a learning outcome, how an assessment task can actually facilitate learning, and so on. Bit by bit, online teaching and learning facilitation will seem to be less daunting.

## 5. You have the resources to change

“It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another”. Nelson Mandela by Himself, 2011, p.89. Johannesburg: Pan Macmillan South Africa.

Lecturers generally have teachable spirits. Lecturers are forever learning about advances in their disciplines, innovative teaching and assessment methods, and so on. So, before we say that we have nothing to draw on to make the shift to online teaching and learning facilitation, let’s hit the ‘pause’ button and take stock of what we have. We have:

- Teachable spirits and curious minds.
- Experience in receiving and facilitating learning and teaching from a contact perspective, as both learners and lecturers.
- Some experience (possibly) in curating online resources in Moodle as an adjunct to the teaching we do in class.
- LT Collab professional teaching and learning experience design staff as well as colleagues in the faculties who can provide capacity building and support.
- Access to many free webinars and resources on online teaching and assessment.
- The Moodle Learning Management System with many technological tools that aid us to develop e-tivities, quizzes, etc. Plus there’s ZOOM, MS Teams, etc.

So, we have many personal, institutional and technological tools and support to assist us to develop our online teaching competence. It is not that we do not have anything. “It is what we make out of what we have” that is the critical factor.

## 6. Learn from your mistakes as you adapt to change

“The greatest glory in living is not in falling, but in rising every time we fall”. Nelson Mandela. Accessed from: <https://succeedfeed.com/nelson-mandela-quotes/>

“Do not judge me by my successes, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again.” Nelson Mandela. Accessed from: <https://succeedfeed.com/nelson-mandela-quotes/>

**Be prepared to learn from your mistakes.** If your plan does not work out, do not worry. Mistakes provide wonderful learning opportunities. You can adapt your plan and see if it then works better for you.

**Be adaptable.** If one solution does not work, try another one. Otherwise, you will feel stuck and become anxious.

## 7. To reach the End Goal of Change you have to Stay the Course

"After climbing a great hill. One only finds that there are many more hills to climb". Nelson Mandela. Accessed from: <https://succeedfeed.com/nelson-mandela-quotes/>

It takes courage, determination, tenacity and being prepared to stay the course to get to the end goal. There will be many hills to climb up and down. We have to make our way through completing the first semester, and then the second semester as we strive to achieve our goal of giving all students the opportunity to complete the 2020 academic year. "Tenacious people ... know that trying times are no time to quit trying" .

## 8. In times of great change, greatness is required of you

"Sometimes, it falls upon a generation to be great. You can be that great generation. Let your greatness blossom". Nelson Mandela by Himself, 2011, p.122. Johannesburg: Pan Macmillan South Africa.

"Your playing small does not serve the world. Who are you not to be great?" Nelson Mandela. Accessed from: <https://succeedfeed.com/nelson-mandela-quotes/>

"It always seems impossible until it's done". Nelson Mandela. Accessed from: <https://succeedfeed.com/nelson-mandela-quotes/>

It has fallen upon us to have to do something great and extraordinary to complete the 2020 academic year amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Choosing to "play small" and shirk away from this enormous task, is not an option if we are to assist our students to complete the academic year. Instead, we need to let our "greatness blossom" as we summons our innovative, creative minds and spirits to get the impossible done.

### References

<sup>1</sup>"Shrink the change" is a concept introduced by Heath, C. & Heath, D. (2010). Switch. How to change things when change is hard. Chapter 6: Shrink the change, p. 124-148. New York: Random House Business Books.

<sup>2</sup>From J.C. Maxwell (2003). Leadership for every day, p.366. Cape Town: Struik Christian Books Ltd.