# Repositório ISCTE-IUL

# Transforming Higher Education Through Active Engagement and Creative Teaching
## Reflections and Practices

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## ABSTRACT

This chapter explores a transformative approach to higher education that shifts from traditional, lecture-based instruction to active, student-centered learning grounded in creativity, empathy, and experiential engagement. Drawing on the context of the Bologna Process and inspired by Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, the authors reflect on their experience teaching Design Thinking and Public Presentations with Acting Techniques at Iscte. Through these courses, students engage in real-world problem-solving, improvisation, prototyping, and self-expression – developing essential transversal skills such as communication, teamwork, empathy, and critical thinking. The chapter emphasizes the role of the educator as a coach and facilitator who creates emotionally intelligent learning environments where students are encouraged to take risks, collaborate, and co-construct knowledge. Feedback is positioned as a strategic, developmental tool that fosters growth, reflection, and motivation. Student feedback highlights increased confidence, autonomy, and personal transformation, while also pointing to areas for improvement, such as activity pacing and integration of real-world challenges. The authors argue that for higher education to remain relevant in an unpredictable world, institutions must prioritize curricular flexibility, active methodologies, and a culture of innovation that supports both students and educators. Ultimately, the chapter calls for a redefinition of teaching as a relational, reflective, and human-centered practice that empowers learners to thrive personally and professionally.

**Keywords**: active learning, higher education, empathy, creativity, feedback, student-centered learning, soft skills, transformative pedagogy

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a transformative approach to higher education, structured in six interconnected sections that explore the transition from traditional models to active student-centered methodologies. Initially, it contextualizes the need to rethink higher education in the face of contemporary challenges, followed by an analysis of educational transformation in the context of the Bologna Process. The text continues with a reflection on the teacher's perspective in implementing active methodologies, then explores how active

engagement transforms learning. The final two sections present concrete teaching experiences in Design Thinking and Public Presentations with Acting Techniques, culminating with lessons learned and implications for educators. This structure directly dialogues with Iscte's Pedagogical Model, which emphasizes an "interactive approach, supported by diverse pedagogical methods and strategies" (Iscte, 2022, p. 5), and highlights the importance of "encouraging students to be active and autonomous in their learning process" (Iscte, 2022, p. 5). The practices described in this chapter align with the active methods valued by the institutional model, which "enable students to explore, interact, solve and analyze" (Iscte, 2022, p. 8).

## REFRAMING HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education has long been rooted in a traditional lecture-based format, where students sit passively while knowledge is transmitted from the instructor to the learner. This model, while effective in some contexts, often fails to equip students with the skills they need to thrive in an ever-changing world. Today's students are no longer passive recipients of information – they must be critical thinkers, problem solvers, and active participants in shaping their futures. As teachers, we found ourselves confronting a new generation of learners – students who interact with information differently, who question established norms, and who demand more than rote memorization. Faced with this shift, we had to stop and reflect: How do we adapt? How do we make learning more meaningful for them?

We soon realized that creativity has never been more essential. In a world where technological advancements continuously reshape industries and societal needs, the future remains uncertain and unpredictable. The careers our students will pursue may not yet exist, and the challenges they will encounter are beyond our current imagination. The only way to prepare them effectively is to nurture their creativity, adaptability, and problem-solving skills. Creativity is not just an asset – it is a necessity. More than ever, students must learn to navigate ambiguity, think divergently, and engage with complex problems from multiple perspectives.

## TRANSFORMING EDUCATION IN THE BOLOGNA ERA

In line with this vision, the ongoing transformation of higher education must be contextualized within the pedagogical shift driven by the Bologna Process. This European initiative, aimed at creating a more cohesive, transparent, and comparable Higher Education Area, has redefined teaching and learning

dynamics. One of its most significant contributions is the transition from teacher-centered models to student-centered approaches that emphasize active engagement, autonomy, and the construction of knowledge.

This transformation demands more than structural change – it requires reimagining educator and student roles. Teachers become facilitators and mentors, while students actively explore, question, and shape their learning. This reflects Freire's (2021) vision in *Pedagogy of Autonomy* of education as a critical, dialogic, and transformative process, moving away from the passive banking model. Teaching must promote autonomy and knowledge grounded in awareness and experience.

This ideological and methodological shift urges a rethinking of pedagogy, aligning with international standards while prioritizing student engagement. Higher education should foster reflexivity, imagination, and meaning-making over content delivery. As Zabalza (2004) asserts, a diploma alone no longer defines competence. Learning must extend beyond the classroom, supported by flexible curricula and open environments that build both technical and transversal skills.

In this new context, higher education institutions, and particularly Iscte, must respond to societal demands, scientific advancements, and the growing challenges of employability and entrepreneurship. This requires an intentional focus on cultivating core competencies – those that span both personal and professional domains. As highlighted in the literature (Alves, 2003; Andrews & Higson, 2008; Moreno, 2006), institutions must equip students with skills that reflect the complexity of today's labor market and prepare them for a world marked by rapid change and unpredictability.

These competencies include, but are not limited to: creativity, empathy, autonomy, critical and reflective thinking, effective communication, public speaking, active listening, the ability to understand and interpret body language, planning and organization, innovation, teamwork, cooperation, and the capacity to solve real and complex problems. Moreno (2005, 2006) further distinguishes these as transversal work competencies – also referred to as key, generic, essential, or transferable competencies (Cabral-Cardoso, Estêvão, & Silva, 2006) – that transcend technical expertise and are foundational to functioning effectively in diverse professional contexts.

## WHY THESE TWO DISCIPLINES?

The courses we teach – Design Thinking and Public Presentations with Acting Techniques – offer practical, student-centered responses to current educational demands. They foster creative exploration, collaboration, and critical

engagement, embodying Iscte's Pedagogical Model, which views knowledge as both generative and transformative (Iscte, 2022, p. 5).

Design Thinking, rooted in empathy and human-centered design, is often taught as a structured process. However, students struggled to grasp its full potential when taught theoretically. By incorporating experiential methods – role-playing, prototyping, and real-world challenges – we helped them internalize its principles and see the role of empathy in effective solutions. This aligns with Iscte's emphasis on active, experiential methods (Iscte, 2022, p. 8) and with the focus of the Bologna framework on doing over knowing, process over outcome, and exploration over certainty.

The course on Public Presentations with Acting Techniques addresses a crucial yet often overlooked challenge in higher education: communication. Traditional public speaking classes emphasize structure and delivery but rarely engage with the emotional and expressive elements that foster genuine connection. Many students arrive burdened by fear and anxiety around public speaking. By incorporating theatrical techniques, improvisation, and role--playing, we create a space that builds confidence, spontaneity, and expressive freedom. These practices not only enhance performance – they also nurture empathy, self-awareness, and a deeper grasp of interpersonal dynamics. This approach exemplifies Iscte's pedagogical principle that "learning is built in relation to others" (Iscte, 2022, p. 5-6).

Both courses are part of the Soft Skills Laboratory at Iscte and reflect a pedagogical philosophy grounded in active participation and experimentation. They echo the very spirit of the Bologna Process by turning the classroom into a living laboratory – where failure is reframed as growth, curiosity is encouraged, and learning becomes a transformative journey. This approach is perfectly aligned with Iscte's commitment to "transversal competencies" which are considered "fundamental for the pursuit of studies or for entry into active life" (Iscte, 2022, p. 6). The emphasis is not only on acquiring knowledge but on developing a mindset – creative, critical, and collaborative – that will allow students to adapt and thrive in the face of future uncertainties.

## THE TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

Our shift from traditional teaching to a more interactive, experiential approach was both challenging and eye-opening. At first, we were not sure if students would embrace the change or prefer passive learning. But as we experimented, they became more engaged, motivated, and empowered. They were not just learning theories – they were applying, reflecting, and making them their own. This evolution also led us to rethink our roles, moving from knowledge

providers to facilitators – coaches guiding students through experiences that challenged assumptions and encouraged self-discovery. This transformation embodies Iscte's pedagogical vision where "the student is considered an active agent in their learning process" (Iscte, 2022, p. 5-6).

This reflects a broader shift in higher education toward active learning. As Felder and Brent (2009, 2017) explain, these strategies involve meaningful tasks – reading, writing, discussing, producing, experimenting, and reflecting – that promote deeper understanding by engaging higher-order thinking and connecting content to students' values and experiences. More than a pedagogical trend, this marks a philosophical shift. Moving from an objectivist model to a more critical, dialectical approach reshapes our understanding of learning. As Freire (2021) emphasizes in *Pedagogy of Autonomy*, education must be dialogic and transformative, centered on autonomy and students' lived experiences – not just the transmission of facts.

We have seen this firsthand. As we stepped back and let students lead their learning, our classrooms became spaces of exploration, dialogue, and discovery. Teaching grew more dynamic, fulfilling, and aligned with the future we aim to prepare students for. This transformation is not only pedagogical – it is personal. It reaffirmed our belief that education should prepare students not just for exams, but for life.

At the core of this shift is the recognition that universities no longer monopolize knowledge, and a diploma alone no longer defines competence. As Zabalza (2004) points out, graduates are now assessed by the skills, competencies, and adaptability gained during their studies. Higher education must therefore move beyond content delivery to actively foster both technical and transversal competencies (Alves, 2003; Andrews & Higson, 2008; Moreno, 2006).

Transversal skills – also called key, generic, or essential competencies (Cabral--Cardoso, Estêvão, & Silva, 2006; Moreno, 2005) – include collaboration, communication, critical reflection, and problem-solving. These are cultivated through project-based learning, hands-on activities, and relational ecologies. In this context, educational technologies and collaborative methods are not optional but essential for preparing students for today's labor market.

Yet, the shift to active learning goes beyond employability. It is also about human development. When institutions adopt pedagogies that value prior knowledge, support agency, and encourage participation, they empower learners to shape their academic and professional paths. As Freire (2021) reminds us, education at its best forms individuals who act ethically, responsibly, and creatively in society.

Ultimately, our journey as teachers has been about more than adapting to change – it has been about redefining what it means to teach in an ever-evolving

world. Through active learning, we have witnessed profound transformations in our students – and in ourselves. As they have grown more autonomous and engaged, we have become more reflective, open, and inspired. Rethinking how we teach has not only improved student learning – it has enriched our own practice as well.

## RETHINKING THE CLASSROOM: HOW ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT TRANSFORMS LEARNING

### Why Active Engagement Matters

One of the most significant transformations we observed in our classrooms was the shift from passive reception of knowledge to active participation. When students are truly engaged, they no longer see learning as an obligation but as a process in which they have ownership. This engagement fosters self--awareness, empathy, and a deeper connection to the material. It also allows students to develop a better understanding of themselves – how they think, how they communicate, and how they interact with others. Through this process, learning becomes another layer of self-discovery, where they see how their thoughts, ideas, and actions impact the world around them.

This transition is crucial because it moves education beyond memorization and standardized assessments. Instead of simply absorbing information, students become active participants in their own learning. They engage with ideas, question assumptions, and develop independent perspectives. This shift is essential in preparing them for an unpredictable future, where adaptability and creative problem-solving will be the most valuable skills they can possess.

### How These Principles Align with Design Thinking and Public Speaking

Active engagement is key to both Design Thinking and Public Speaking. In Design Thinking, students adopt user perspectives, manage ambiguity, and refine ideas iteratively. In Public Speaking, they build presence, read audiences, and communicate confidently. These skills demand practice, experience, and reflection – not passive learning.

To support this, we applied strategies aligned with Iscte's pedagogical model. The flipped classroom lets students study theory beforehand, allowing class time for hands-on application. This deepens engagement through discussion, analysis, and real-time practice. Experiential learning emphasizes doing

over theory, with students testing ideas, receiving feedback, and refining their work. Collaboration and peer feedback enhance this process, as group work fosters communication, negotiation, support, and active listening – essential for understanding diverse perspectives and contributing meaningfully.

As Paramole et al. (2024) highlight in their research on active listening, when educators practice this approach, "students are more likely to participate in discussions, express their thoughts freely, and develop a sense of belonging within the classroom" (p. 77). This perspective aligns with Hayakawa and Miyahara (2024) work on empathy through listening, which emphasizes how attentive listening creates a feedback loop of receptivity that enables mutual perspective reshaping – a critical component of both Design Thinking and effective public communication.

## Our Experience: From Passive to Active Students

As we adopted active learning methodologies, we witnessed a remarkable shift in student motivation, participation, and creativity. With greater freedom to explore and express ideas, students became more engaged and invested. They gained a voice, a sense of agency, and the power to shape their own learning. This autonomy fostered not only stronger engagement but also a deeper connection to the material, as students moved from passive recipients to active creators of knowledge.

Despite its successes, the transition faced challenges. Many students expected passive learning – sitting, listening, and note-taking – and initially resisted active, physical engagement. The first step was shifting this mindset and helping them adapt to a more dynamic approach. Equally important was creating a safe space for sharing ideas without judgment. Building trust, encouraging risk-taking and experimentation, and helping students see mistakes as essential to learning required time and support.

A key shift was challenging the traditional teacher-student hierarchy. Many viewed the teacher as the sole authority, so fostering critical engagement, independent thinking, and recognition of their own expertise took consistent effort. This shift in power meant they were not just learning from us – but with us.

As students embraced this approach, they grew more confident, independent, and open to meaningful dialogue. By creating a space of trust, creativity, and collaboration, we helped them fully engage in active learning. Once they experienced learning as dynamic and personal, there was no turning back – it became truly their own.

## TEACHING DESIGN THINKING THROUGH EXPERIENCE AND CREATIVITY

### How Traditional Design Thinking Courses Fall Short

Traditional Design Thinking courses often emphasize theory, presenting it as a structured, linear process to memorize. While this offers a basic framework, it lacks the hands-on experience needed for deep learning. Design Thinking centers on creativity, problem-solving, and human-centered innovation – none of which can be fully understood without active engagement. Many students learn the steps but miss the uncertainty, iteration, and improvisation that make the process impactful.

To close this gap, we designed our approach so students don't just learn the process – they live it. Through empathy exercises and rapid prototyping, they engage in real problem-solving, stepping into users' shoes to create solutions that are both innovative and relevant.

### How We Teach It Differently

A key component of our approach is emphasizing empathy and self-awareness from the very beginning. Before students begin designing solutions, they must first develop a deep understanding of the people they aim to serve. This involves conducting interviews, making observations, and reflecting on real-world needs. Interestingly, this emphasis on empathy has not only transformed how students approach design but has also reshaped our own perspective as educators. Teaching empathy requires us to embody it ourselves – understanding our students' needs, adapting to their perspectives, and creating a learning environment where they feel supported and valued.

Beyond research and observation, we also push students to explore creativity--driven prototyping. Rather than relying solely on traditional tools such as paper sketches and digital wireframes, students work with improvised materials, storytelling techniques, and artistic representation to develop and communicate their ideas. This hands-on, multi-sensory approach fosters deeper engagement and encourages students to break away from conventional thinking patterns.

Furthermore, we ensure that student projects are rooted in real-world challenges. This not only enhances their learning experience but also demonstrates the real impact their creativity and problem-solving abilities can have.

## PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS AND ACTING TECHNIQUES: ENGAGING STUDENTS BEYOND THE STAGE

### The Fear of Public Speaking: A Common Barrier

Among the most significant challenges we encounter in our Public Presentations course is the overwhelming anxiety students feel toward speaking in front of an audience. For most of them, presentations have long been associated with evaluation, judgment, and the rigid expectations of traditional education. Their earlier experiences, particularly during high school, framed presentations as a test – an obligatory exercise designed solely for grading rather than as an empowering opportunity to express ideas or connect with an audience. Unsurprisingly, this mindset turns public speaking into a source of stress rather than a moment to shine.

Traditional teaching methods tend to reinforce this perception by focusing predominantly on structure, content, and technical precision. Rarely do these approaches prioritize building the speaker's confidence or nurturing their sense of presence. Yet, we believe that confidence is the foundation of effective communication. Without it, even the most well-crafted speech risks losing its impact. Helping students discover and develop that inner confidence became one of our core goals in reshaping how we teach public presentations.

### How We Transform Public Speaking Through Acting

Our approach draws heavily from acting techniques and improvisational theater, bringing an essential element of playfulness into the learning process. By introducing theater games, role-playing scenarios, and improvisation exercises, we create a space where students are encouraged to explore their own presence and spontaneity. These activities serve as a warm-up not only for their voices and bodies but also for their minds, easing them into a more relaxed and open state where learning can truly happen.

Each class becomes an opportunity to loosen up and break free from the rigid patterns that students have internalized. We, as teachers, participate alongside them in warm-up exercises designed to connect voice and body. Together, we practice storytelling, mimicry, and improvisation, narrate news, and simulate real-life situations. In doing so, we foster a supportive and playful atmosphere where students gradually lose their fear of judgment and begin to enjoy the act of being seen and heard. They start to experiment with their range of expression, discovering the power of their own voices and gestures.

As the course progresses, students also begin to understand the significance of nonverbal communication. Body language, facial expressions, and voice

modulation become key elements in their performances. We guide them to recognize how these tools can enhance their message and deepen their connection with an audience. In doing so, they not only learn to speak but to communicate – to embody their message with confidence and empathy.

## BEYOND THE LECTURE: WHAT EDUCATORS CAN LEARN FROM THESE APPROACHES

### The Shift from Teaching to Coaching

Reflecting on our journey, one of our most profound realizations has been the need to shift from traditional teaching to coaching. For too long, university education has relied on a one-way model of knowledge transmission. Yet, our experience has shown that knowledge cannot simply be delivered – it must be constructed, owned, and embodied by the learner.

Our role has shifted from delivering content to facilitating meaningful learning through self-discovery, experimentation, and creativity. This requires letting go of control and embracing the unpredictability of student-centered learning, guided by humility, empathy, and active listening. We support students as emerging professionals, reflecting Iscte's emphasis on "tutorial guidance" and more individualized teacher-student interaction (Iscte, 2022, p. 7).

Central to this model is feedback – a powerful, often overlooked tool. In a coaching approach, feedback is ongoing and transformative, not just a final comment. In process-focused environments, it helps students set goals, track progress, and improve, while also developing lasting academic, professional, and personal skills.

To be effective, feedback must be personalized, meaningful, and future--focused. As Mahony and Poulos (2003, 2008) note, it is a strategic element in teaching and learning. Their research shows that students see feedback as essential to motivation and development, especially when it fosters reflection and clarifies understanding: *"Feedback was used to enhance motivation and learning, encourage reflection and clarify understanding"* (Mahony & Poulos, 2008, p. 144). Our experience confirms this – when feedback is tailored to each student's context, it does more than assess – it empowers.

Lizzio and Wilson (2008) found students view feedback as encouraging and fair, while Weaver (2006) emphasizes the need for constructive comments to identify strengths and improve: "feedback containing constructive comment was necessary for improvement" (p. 379). Together, these findings show that

feedback should move beyond judgment to become a forward-looking dialogue that supports reflection and growth.

Mahony and Poulos (2008) highlight three factors that enhance feedback: clear purpose, personalized comments tailored to specific work, and developmental guidance that offers tools for future improvement – not just critiques of past performance.

This nuanced view of feedback reinforces the shift from traditional teaching to a coaching-oriented approach, where the professor's role is to support growth through responsive, relational, and reflective interaction. The classroom becomes a space of ongoing dialogue, where feedback is not the end of a process but an integral part of the learning journey.

When we create this kind of environment – one that values exploration, collaboration, and authentic communication – students flourish. They move beyond surface-level performance and begin to take ownership of their learning. They build the confidence to challenge themselves, to ask meaningful questions, and to make mistakes in pursuit of deeper understanding. They begin to realize that learning is not about right or wrong answers, but about inquiry, risk-taking, and continuous evolution.

Ultimately, effective feedback is not just a pedagogical strategy – it is a statement of trust. It tells students that we see them, that we are invested in their growth, and that we believe in their potential to develop not only as learners but as agents of change in the world beyond the university walls.

## Lessons Learned from Our Experience

Adopting active, creative methods came with its challenges. One of the first was student hesitation – many arrived conditioned by years of passive learning. Encouraging them to step out of their comfort zones, speak up, and embrace uncertainty required patience, persistence, and a deliberate effort to build trust. It took time to create a safe, inclusive environment where students felt empowered to take risks, make mistakes, and see those mistakes not as failures, but as essential steps in their learning journey.

Our goal was to shift the classroom dynamic – from passive absorption to active participation, from individual performance to collaborative exploration, and from teacher-led instruction to shared knowledge construction. This transition, though demanding, has led to some of the most powerful moments in our teaching experience.

To better understand the impact of these methodologies, we conducted anonymous student surveys to gather feedback and evaluate their responses

to our pedagogical strategies. The insights were invaluable – not only did they confirm many of our hopes, but they also highlighted areas for thoughtful refinement and deeper reflection.

Students identified active strategies – practical projects, group discussions, and collaborative learning – as highly effective and engaging. These methods boosted academic involvement, confidence, motivation, and participation. Hands-on prototyping, interactive dialogue, and iterative problem-solving were especially valued for deepening understanding and aiding retention.

They also reported strong development of soft skills such as teamwork, creativity, critical thinking, communication, leadership, and adaptability. Empathy stood out as a central theme, with a focus on understanding others, offering support, and working toward shared goals. This fostered a classroom culture of emotional awareness, mutual respect, and a stronger sense of belonging.

The path was not without challenges. Some students struggled with the pace of activities, particularly during the ideation phases of Design Thinking. A common suggestion was to extend certain exercises to allow more time for deeper engagement and creativity. Others recommended increased intergroup interaction and the inclusion of real-world case studies to better connect theory with practice.

What stood out most was the personal growth students experienced. Many reported increased confidence – particularly in public speaking, creative thinking, and collaboration. These gains were often linked to the supportive, inclusive environment we created. While initial nervousness and group adjustment were common, students consistently recognized the long-term value of overcoming those early hurdles.

This feedback affirms a core belief of our practice: learning is not just cognitive – it is relational, emotional, and deeply human. Educators are more than teachers – they are facilitators, connectors, and architects of the human experience. In this emotionally intelligent model, the teacher becomes a bridge – creating space for inquiry, reflection, and discovery.

Such a role requires emotional competence: understanding group dynamics, fostering trust, and using relationships for growth. It also calls for a strong focus on transversal skills – personal, social, communicative, digital, entrepreneurial, and critical thinking – vital for today's job market and for building a "Project of Self."

In witnessing students move from silent observers to confident collaborators – discovering their voices, navigating uncertainty, and supporting one another – we are reminded why this work matters. The challenges are real, but the breakthroughs are profound. With every risk taken, with every creative idea voiced,

with every moment of genuine collaboration, our students not only learn more – they become more. And that is the most meaningful outcome of all.

## Best Practices for University Professors

As we reflect on what has worked in our teaching practice, a few key principles consistently stand out – principles that have not only transformed our classrooms but have also redefined our understanding of what higher education can and should be.

First, creating space for experiential learning is essential. Students across disciplines benefit from applying knowledge in real-world contexts that are immersive, intellectually, and emotionally engaging. When they analyze, create, and collaborate, learning becomes tangible and transformative.

This aligns with a broader shift in higher education – from knowledge transmission to active, student-centered learning. As Felder and Brent (2017) note, activities like reading, discussing, writing, experimenting, and producing engage higher-order thinking and connect learning to students' abilities, values, and self-awareness.

Second, feedback is essential to this pedagogical model. Regular, constructive feedback helps students reflect, adapt, and grow – academically and personally. More than assessment, it becomes a formative dialogue that builds trust, supports learning as a process, and nurtures resilience. In a space of exploration and risk, thoughtful feedback reassures students they are seen, supported, and capable.

Equally crucial is fostering empathy, creativity, and adaptability – in students and ourselves. This means observing, listening, and responding to learners' emotional and cognitive needs. It treats creativity not as a rare gift, but a vital skill, modeled through how we design and lead learning.

These principles are not isolated – they are part of a broader educational ecosystem that must evolve to meet contemporary demands. Higher education faces increasing pressure to address employability, entrepreneurship, and technological change. In this context, curricular flexibility is not a luxury but a necessity. Institutions must rethink structures, timelines, and assessments to build more relevant and responsive learning environments.

Promoting student autonomy through open learning designs fosters imagination, reflexivity, and meaning-making – qualities increasingly vital in a complex, unpredictable world. These designs empower students to construct, not just receive, knowledge. When learners are empowered, they become more engaged and better prepared to navigate the uncertainties of professional and social life.

## Final Thoughts: The Future of Higher Education

Looking to the future, we believe that engagement-based learning must become a foundational element of higher education. While traditional lectures may still have a role, they can no longer dominate in a world that demands creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration.

For this shift to take root and flourish, institutions must provide educators with the support and resources they need to innovate: flexible curricula, interdisciplinary collaboration, access to tools and technologies, and a culture that values pedagogical experimentation. This is not merely an investment in teaching – it is an investment in the future of learning, and in the potential of every student.

As Freire said, "Education does not transform the world. Education changes people. People transform the world" (Freire, 2021, p. 84) Through Design Thinking and Public Presentations with Acting Techniques, our goal is to help shape creative, critical, and compassionate individuals who will drive that transformation. This reflects the deeper purpose of higher education – not just preparing students for jobs, but empowering them to create the future they want to inhabit.

Ultimately, our experience has shown us that when we trust students with the responsibility for their own learning and give them the tools and the space to experiment, they rise to the challenge. They surprise us, and often, they surprise themselves. This is the heart of transformative education – not just teaching students but empowering them to discover who they are and what they are capable of becoming.

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