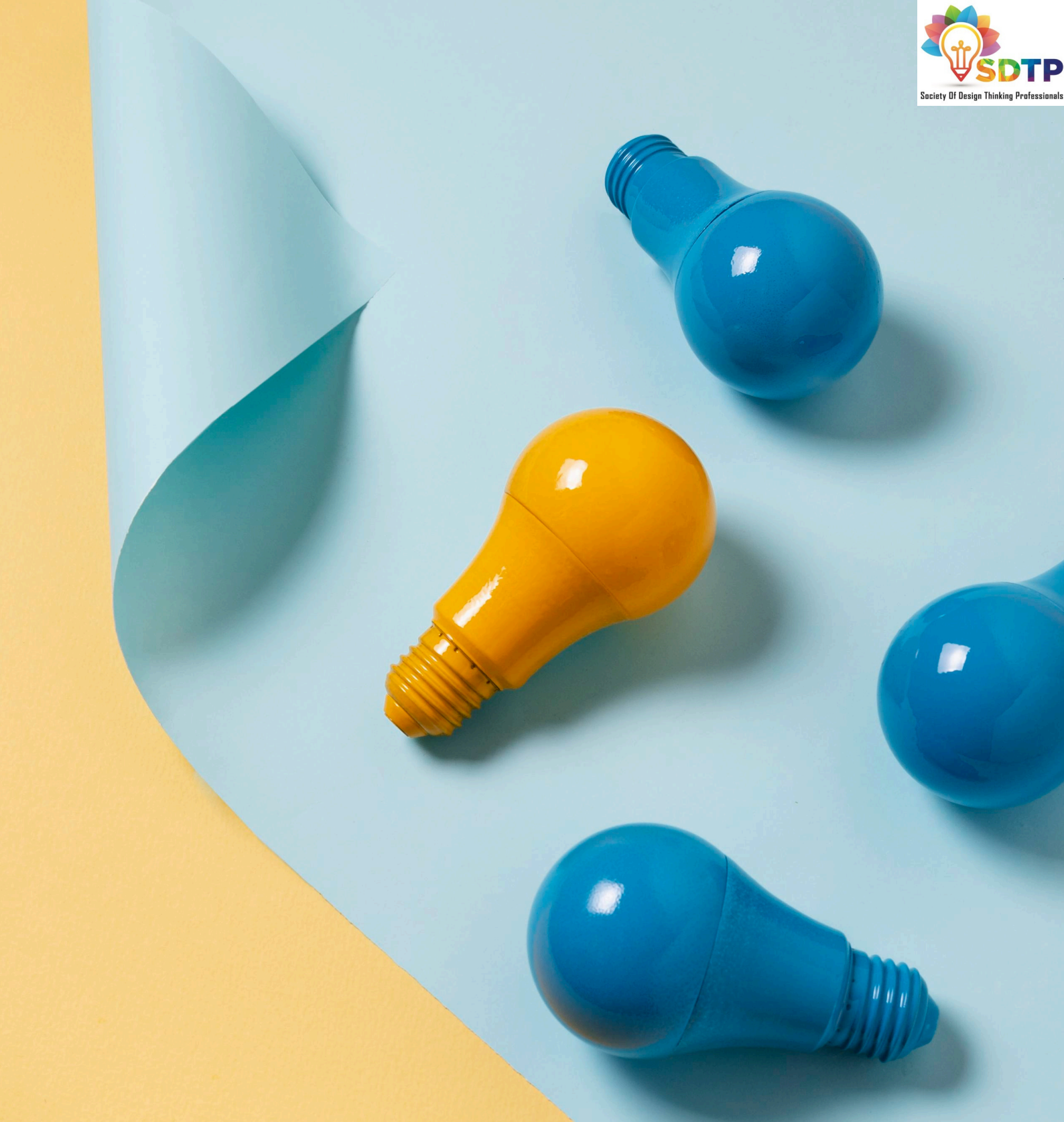

SOCIETY OF DESIGN THINKING PROFESSIONALS NEWSLETTER

Volume 2: Issue 7
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Society of Design Thinking Professionals Newsletter

FOUNDER'S SPEAK

"The future of education lies not in what we teach, but in how we inspire students to think, create, and solve the challenges of tomorrow."

With AI, big data, and technological advancements becoming more pervasive, one of the critical questions facing Indian education is what students should learn for the 21st century. This question has several answers; however, it is increasingly evident that higher education in India must prioritize skill development and focus on solving real-world problems that foster creativity and innovation. Several Indian organizations and studies highlight the essential skills students and professionals need for the future.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes a shift towards multidisciplinary education, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. The policy highlights the importance of integrating vocational education into mainstream education, aiming to provide students with essential skills that align with the demands of the 21st-century workplace.

A report by the World Economic Forum (2020) noted that skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and complex problem-solving are among the top skills required by Indian employers by 2025. Additionally, a LinkedIn study from 2022 highlighted that demand for skills related to AI, machine learning, data analysis, and digital marketing has significantly increased in India, reflecting the broader global trends.

Furthermore, a survey by the India Skills Report 2022 showed that the top skills sought by Indian employers include teamwork (37%), problem-solving (35%), digital literacy (30%), and communication skills (28%). This aligns with the findings from the NEP, which underscores the need to develop these skills in students to prepare them for the evolving job market.

In general, Indian job postings now prioritize a mix of technical skills (such as data analysis and digital tools) and soft skills (such as collaboration, creativity, and adaptability). As the Indian economy becomes more digital and knowledge-based, the demand for these skills will only increase.

Design Thinking, a human-centered approach, offers innovative solutions to address the educational challenges in India. This method can be instrumental in designing new academic programs, courses, and degrees more aligned with industry needs. For example, several Indian institutions, such as IITs and IIMs, have already begun incorporating Design Thinking into their curricula to foster creative problem-solving and innovation among students. This approach allows educators to ask more relevant questions and develop solutions that address real-world challenges effectively.

Stay Tuned!

Dr. Jimmy Jain
Founder
Society of Design Thinking Professionals

Editor's Speak

As an active learner who applies Design principles, I believe Design Thinking tremendously influences student learning. It helps students to become creators rather than consumers of knowledge by turning the emphasis from passive education to active engagement. Students start to have a growth attitude, facing obstacles and picking lessons from mistakes. Design Thinking also helps students develop ownership over their educational path, therefore equipping them for success in a linked and ever more complicated environment.

The goals of schooling are very similar to the ideas behind Design Thinking, like empathy, ideation, prototyping, and iteration. Educators can create learning spaces that keep students interested and motivated by understanding their needs and experiences. Ideation events help students think of new ways to solve problems and be creative. Prototyping and iteration, on the other hand, give them a safe place to try out and improve their ideas. Students learn important skills like communication, teamwork, and critical thinking through hands-on activities and group projects.

Feel free to write to me at **afreen@sdtp.co.uk**, in case of feedback, input, or if you want us to cover any specific topic.

Afreen Fatima
Content & Community Manager
Society of Design Thinking Professionals

Design Thinking Process in Education: Learning Modules

There are six suggestions (tools) for designers who want to start using Design Thinking in higher education. After that, we discuss some important parts of planning a Design Thinking process and offer a way to make teaching with Design Thinking easier. Finally, let's look at two examples that show how this method works.

Learning Foundation

It's important to think about variety. There isn't a single Design Thinking tool that works for everyone. Design Thinking in Higher Education needs to include a range of tasks, groups, and ways to communicate because of this. Interestingly, the question of variety makes it even harder for teachers and instructional designers to plan for the teaching and learning process. Modern education is based on the important questions of what works for whom and when. We know that different ways of teaching and learning don't always work for all students in all situations.

Mechanics of Relationship

Trust between team members is very important in the design thought process and team-building activities must be a part of it. Events that helped people get to know each other were the most inspiring or fun for a group of faculty members who were on a retreat to change the way department meetings are run. Building relationships between people in a group may help them work together better, and research has shown that groups that work together better are usually more productive.

Designing the Vision

Experience with Design Thinking should help with learning or career growth. People who are taking part in the Design Thinking process need to know how the activities are set up and how they help solve the problem being studied. Giving people initial knowledge and training on the techniques and Design Thinking itself lowers their anxiety, increases their interest, and leads to more creative outcomes. Starting with low-risk jobs makes it easier for people to work together, which makes it easier for them to accept and get used to the new way of working.

Creating a Design Road Map

University teachers should tell their students enough about the benefits of new ways of learning and how they relate to the 21st-century skills they need to develop if they want their students to take part in these activities. Design Thinking can help students improve both their design and non-design skills. Telling students this can get them more involved in the process and make them want to learn Design Thinking.

Finally, The Sustainability

Students can learn Design Thinking skills if they get enough formative feedback and practice that is built on important problems. Pedagogical methods and lesson plans that use problem, project, and inquiry-based learning can help students get better at Design Thinking. Finally, when proposing a Design Thinking process in the field of education (or in any field), it is important to ensure that the plan is sustainable. People who take part are usually happy with the

Implementing Design Thinking Principles in Modern Higher Education

Using Design Thinking in the University

Currently, many colleges say that the time and work that these processes take is a problem. They want meaningful incentives to keep team members involved in the process over time. Not only is it hard to get teachers involved in redesign or change processes, but it's also hard to get students involved in the Design Thinking activities that are part of their classes.

Design Thinking tasks should be clearly defined and communicated to students about how they will be graded and how much weight they will have in their overall grades.

Making plans to use Design Thinking in the Classroom

Once the design team has considered all these issues and begins planning for the Design Thinking activity, it is important to include certain elements. The work should first be based on a real-life project. The learning challenge should be a currently relevant problem, not a textbook exercise. Students benefit from engaging with real challenges that allow them to apply their skills and capacities to real-life scenarios.

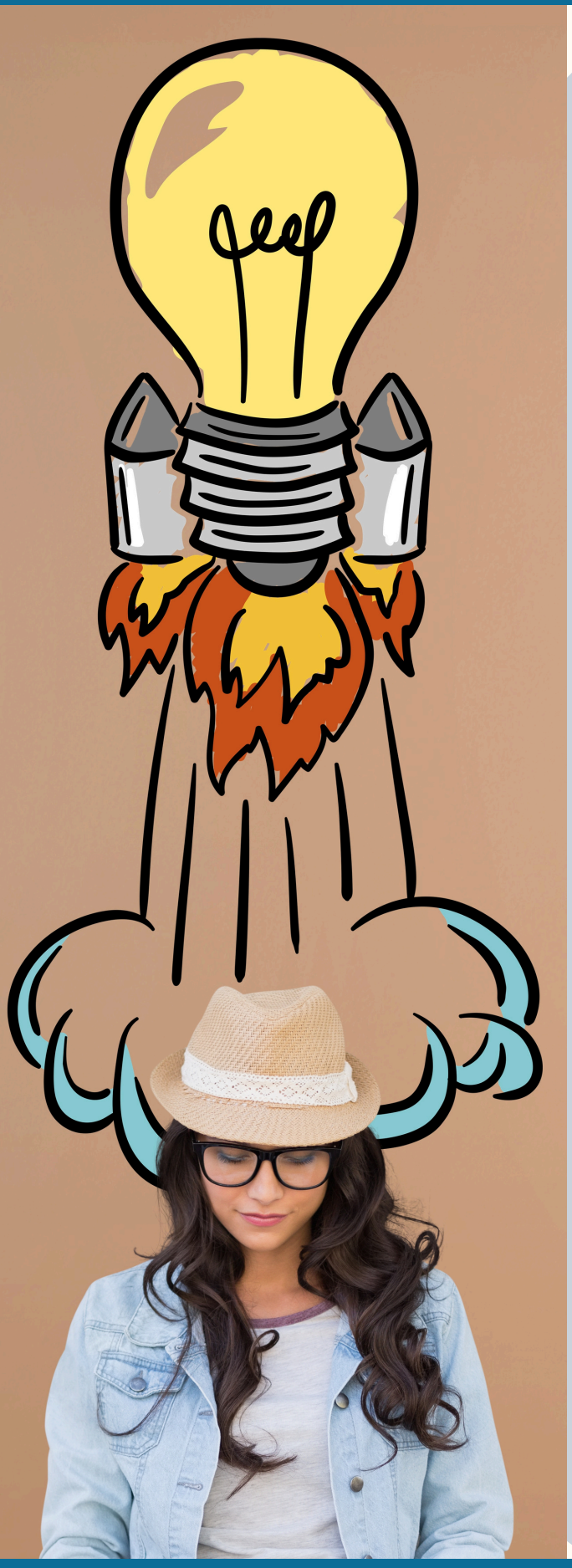
Second, it is important to address the open-ended nature of these problems. Real-life problems have no single correct solution because they are complex and ambiguous. Engaging with complex problems that have no right answer is a good opportunity for students to practice the 21st-century skills that they need for the workplace. Nevertheless, this situation poses a problem for assessment. It is important to explain clearly how the process and final product are to be assessed and the weighting of this assessment in the student's final grades.

Strategic Road Map

Finally, as explained, collaborative work is a learning structure that is suitable for a Design Thinking process. This principle leads to the use of active learning as the main learning strategy. Active learning is a situation in which the students explore issues under the guidance of the instructor rather than simply listening as the instructor presents facts. Students often view education as a passive process in which instructors are the source of knowledge and students are the receivers of knowledge.

Lecture-based courses seem to reinforce this notion. In contrast, the literature suggests that participatory learning is more productive than passive learning. In this type of learning, "the student learns a way of thinking, asking questions, searching for answers, and interpreting observations". This observation brings to mind the key elements of Design Thinking. The active learning approach encompasses a broad variety of instructional techniques whose main characteristic is that they are student-centered.

Case Study: Harnessing Design Thinking for Innovation in Higher Education



Overview

This case study explores the use of Design Thinking (DT) as a methodology to foster innovation in the public education system. The study aimed to identify practices and methodologies that can create conditions necessary for innovation to thrive within established educational structures. By examining the experiences of a group of educators trained in DT, the study revealed how DT helped them address complex, long-standing challenges in their schools and districts.

Context

In the face of increasingly complex challenges, public education systems are searching for ways to foster creativity and drive sustainable solutions. This study was conducted within a group of teachers and administrators who had received training in Design Thinking as part of their professional development. These participants were selected based on their roles as educational leaders responsible for integrating innovative approaches into their practices.

Purpose

Design Thinking was chosen for this research due to its proven ability to:

1. Make individuals and teams more innovative,
2. Shift institutional cultures toward creativity and solution-orientation,
3. Establish the necessary conditions for innovation within structured organizations.

The primary goal was to understand how DT could empower educators to address deeply ingrained problems in their professional environments, and how it could change the way they approach their work.

Methodology

This intrinsic case study relied on data collected from field observations, interviews, and documents. The researchers used two-cycle coding for data analysis:

- **First Cycle**: A priori codes aligned with the Eight Design Abilities of Creative Problem Solvers were used to organize initial data.
- **Second Cycle**: In vivo coding was employed to allow themes to naturally emerge from the participants' experiences.

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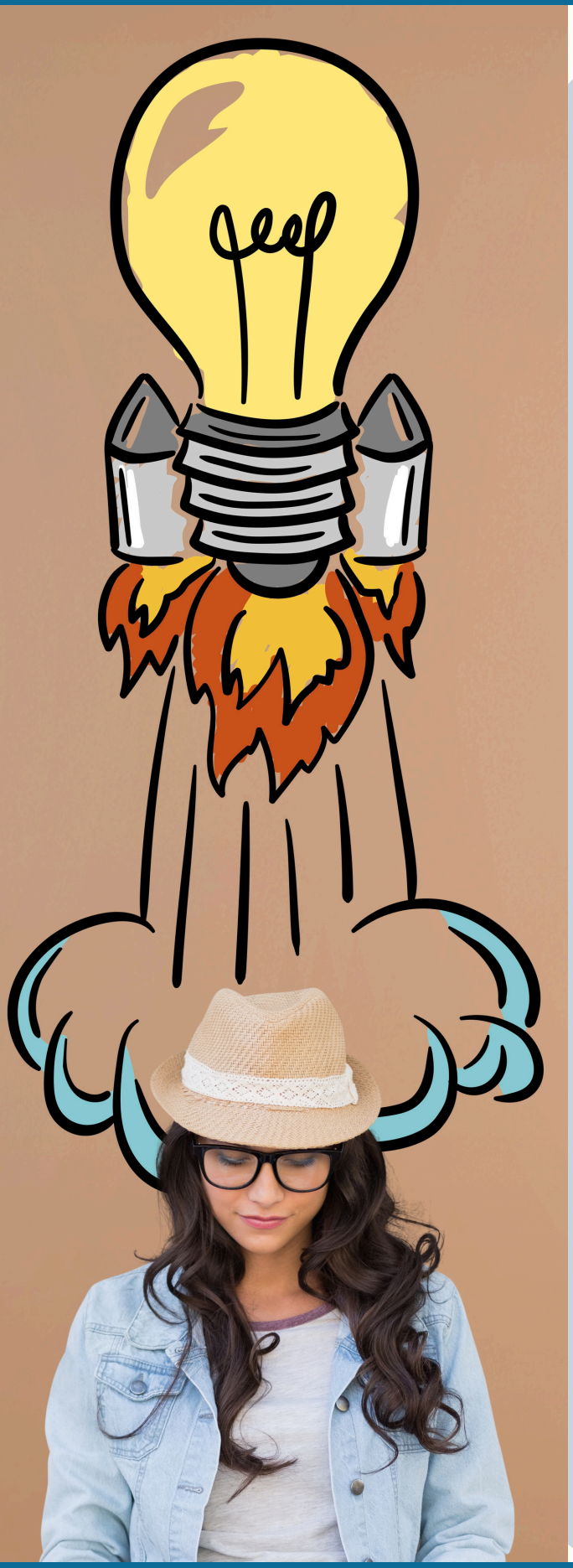
Case Study: Harnessing Design Thinking for Innovation in Higher Education



Findings

Three key insights emerged from the analysis:

- Embodiment of Designer Mindsets and Skillsets: Educators demonstrated significant growth in adopting the mindsets and skillsets associated with designers. This shift empowered them to think creatively, experiment, and take on challenges with a more flexible and open approach, leading to better problem-solving.
- Self-Actualization of Creative Confidence: One of the most profound outcomes of the study was the development of creative confidence among educators. Through the DT process, participants felt more capable of developing innovative solutions, challenging traditional approaches, and embracing new methodologies. This heightened creative confidence enabled them to take more risks and explore diverse solutions.
- Fostering Universal Collaboration: Design Thinking facilitated stronger collaboration across various stakeholders. Educators, administrators, and students worked together in new, synergistic ways to co-create solutions to persistent issues. This collaboration broke down silos, allowing for more inclusive and dynamic problem-solving.

Impact

The use of DT provided a new framework for educators to reimagine their approach to solving problems. It not only instilled a culture of innovation in the schools involved but also equipped educators with the tools to drive continuous improvement. DT's emphasis on empathy, collaboration, and iterative problem-solving fostered a school environment where creativity and innovation could flourish.

Conclusion

This case study confirms that Design Thinking can be a transformative tool for educational leaders seeking to innovate within the rigid structures of public education. By embodying the principles of DT, educators were able to address entrenched issues in creative, collaborative ways, fostering a more dynamic and solution-oriented culture in their institutions. This research adds to the growing body of evidence supporting the use of DT in educational leadership, showing that it not only changes the way problems are approached but also builds a culture of innovation that can sustain long-term change.

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Views from Thought Leader - Dr. Swati Lodha

> *"Institutions learned the importance of empathy and putting the consumer —students in this case— first. Design Thinking shifted their mindset to prioritise student learning, similar to how consumers are prioritised when creating products."*

Dr. Swati Lodha is an accomplished educationist, #1 best-selling author, leadership and parenting expert, and social entrepreneur with over 24 years of experience in transforming lives. Currently the Director at MET Institute of Management, she has significantly contributed to academia, corporate training, and social entrepreneurship. A Harvard Kennedy school alumna with humble beginnings, she has led renowned institutions and founded ventures like Swash PD Pvt. Ltd. Dr. Lodha has authored multiple bestsellers, including "Don't Raise Your Kids, Raise Yourself!" Her extensive accolades include the Bharat Gaurav Award and Times Power Women Award, reflecting her dedication to empowering individuals across all age groups.

Join us for a thought-provoking discussion with our Educational Leader, Dr. Swati, where she shares how Design Thinking captivated her attention by offering a framework for simple yet impactful innovation. Discover how Design Thinking's principles are transforming education. With a commitment to open innovation and interdisciplinary approaches, she illustrates the immense potential of Design Thinking through real-world applications in education. As we explore the future of education, learn how Design Thinking equips educators and students with the adaptability and creativity needed to thrive in an ever-evolving landscape.

What fascinated you about Design Thinking and what initially drew you to this approach?

I have been in the education sector for almost 26 years and witnessed many transitions. When I started my MBA, we were learning programming languages like Lotus and COBOL, and platforms like Facebook or companies like Apple were unheard of. During that era, access to learning was considered a privilege, and creativity in learning wasn't emphasized. With the privatization of education from 2000 to 2005, we saw a growth in the number of colleges, which made us consider how to engage students more creatively. Innovations like Google, IT advancements post-2007, gamification, and simulations prompted the need for new pedagogical tools. By 2012-13, with the rise of WhatsApp, Instagram, and bite-sized content, attention became the currency. Design Thinking attracted me because it allows for simple, organic innovation, ideation, prototyping, and testing. It helps us think differently by iterating on ideas quickly and effectively.

What do you think about Design Thinking and its application?

The applicability of Design Thinking is immense, especially with the **ADEPT** formula. As an educator, I believe in open innovation and interdisciplinary approaches. We should not confine innovation to our fields but apply management principles to solve problems in areas like medicine and physics. I recently wrote a case study using Design Thinking to solve a problem in medicine, where management students helped doctors. The potential for open innovation and multidisciplinary solutions is vast, though often underappreciated.

Would you share a use case where an HR challenge was overcome with the application of Design Thinking?

Recently, we conducted a five-day Design Thinking workshop as a faculty development program at a school in Mumbai. Eighty faculty members participated, divided into 12 groups. Each group created a pedagogical tool specific to their subject by the end of the workshop. For example, two groups created games, one made a rap song to teach chemistry, some developed an accounting game, and one created a podcast for better student-parent-school communication. Even faculty unfamiliar with Design Thinking learned to apply it and tested their creations. We're doing another program in August, sponsored by **AICTE**, focusing on how Design Thinking can support the implementation of the National Education Policy.

What was the response from participants after the Design Thinking workshop?

The workshop was an eye-opener for the participants. They found the Design Thinking process simple and realized that creating isn't as difficult as it seems. They learned the importance of empathy and putting the consumer—students in this case—first. It challenged their biases and conditioned thinking, emphasizing understanding students' needs and preferences. Design Thinking shifted their mindset to prioritize student learning, similar to how consumers are prioritized when creating products. The process corrected their sequence of thoughts, moving from empathy to problem definition, which was a significant shift for them.

How can Design Thinking be applied to create more engaging and effective learning experiences for students?

Design Thinking can be used by gamifying, simulating, and empathizing with students. Today's students dislike boring lectures and one-way communication; they prefer involvement and group activities. Educators need to convert concepts into engaging activities, making classes more inclusive and catering to students with different learning preferences and abilities. Design Thinking helps create tools and activities for varied learners, accommodating quick learners, visual learners, and those with conditions like ADHD.

What tools and strategies could be used to apply Design Thinking in education?

The tools and strategies depend on the subject being taught. For subjects involving theoretical constructs, like philosophy or discussion-based topics, activities that stimulate reflection and decision-making are ideal, such as simulations and gamification. Poetry, rhymes, and case studies can also be used. For subjects like management, accounting, or math, memory games or activities that help students memorize formulas and concepts are beneficial. Design Thinking provides the freedom to explore and adapt teaching strategies to suit each subject's needs.

As an academic leader, what trends do you foresee in the future of education, and how can Design Thinking influence these trends?

In the future, human intellect won't be needed for repetitive tasks like programming, which AI can handle. Instead, creativity and analytical abilities will be more crucial. Adaptability will be key as we prepare students for jobs that haven't been invented yet. Design Thinking promotes adaptability through empathy, problem definition, prototyping, and testing, allowing educators and students to pivot quickly. This approach prepares us for a future where creativity and flexibility are essential.

What advice do you have for educational leaders hesitant to adopt Design Thinking practices?

To be part of the future, it's crucial to be flexible, adaptable, and original. The future will be tougher for the human race, so it's essential to keep evolving. While I don't usually give unsolicited advice, embracing these qualities is vital for staying relevant in education.

Follow Dr. Swati's work

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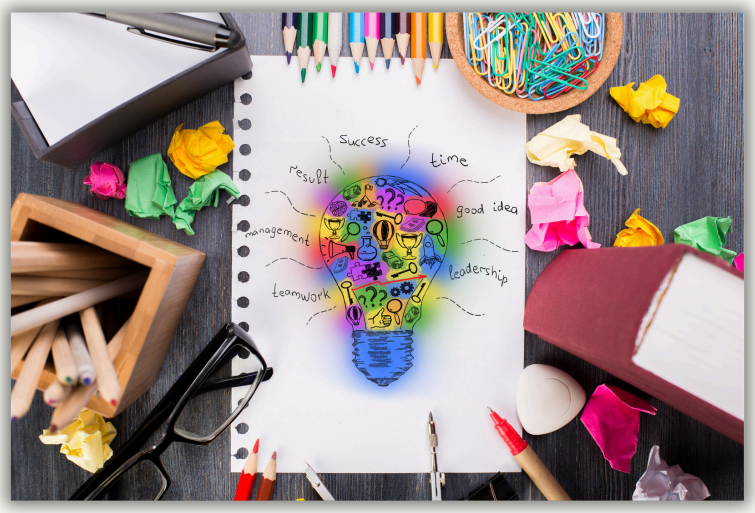
Education Reimagined



Reimagining education through Design Thinking brings a dynamic shift towards more student-centered and experiential learning. By applying DT principles, educators can reshape traditional learning spaces to meet the diverse needs of students. This approach encourages active participation, allowing students to become creators of knowledge rather than passive recipients. Design Thinking fosters critical skills such as creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving, while empowering students to take ownership of their learning journey. As this methodology continues to transform education, it opens new possibilities for innovation and engagement, preparing students for future challenges.

"Along the way, they begin to navigate ambiguity, experiment, and interpret results. This inherently optimistic process shows students that anyone can make the world a better place."
~ Becky Peters, Program Manager at the Innovation Center at St. Vrain Valley Schools, Colorado

"While Design Thinking may be a polarizing term, these sorts of lessons—where students design and test solutions—have mainstream appeal."
~ Henry Mann, Program Director at FUSE, an online STEAM program developed at Northwestern University, Chicago

"Getting educators to use this level of creative problem-solving—let alone getting them to teach concepts like creativity, ideation, and empathy—can be a big ask. But the more they practice design, the stronger the required mental muscles become"
~ Sam Seidel, Director of K12 Strategy and Research, Stanford's d.school

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