

Reigniting the Joy of Learning

Unleash! Forum for Educator@ Learning & Teaching Expo

16 December 2019, Hong Kong - The Hong Kong Design Centre (HKDC) hosted a one-day forum for educators to learn about the value of design thinking in teaching and learning last Friday. The event took place alongside the Learning & Teaching Expo (LTE), one of Asia's annual signature platforms for educators. Educators walked away rethinking the purpose of education and how students could learn for life and happiness.

This was HKDC's first major forum in the second year of its 'Unleash! Empowered by Design Thinking' programme. It aims to propel wider learning and applications of design thinking across different sectors in Hong Kong.

Professor Eric Yim, Chairman of Board of Directors of the HKDC, said in his opening remarks that "Design thinking is a student-centred mindset and approach to creative learning. It motivates students to learn and develop their curiosity, and foster their desire to understand and solve complex problems."

Richard Culatta, CEO of the International Society for Technology in Education and a former Director of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Technology, was the keynote speaker. He spoke on the importance of a more human-centred approach to technology education. "The recipe of success for technology education should start with a vision, followed by preparing the teachers and the technical infrastructure should come last," said Culatta. He also underlined the importance of a problem-solving approach to technology education. "We should use technology to turn students into problem solvers, to enable personalised learning, to create responsible digital citizens, to nurture human-centred skills to design a world that is kind and collaborative."

Facilitated by Jeff Sze, Political Assistant to the Secretary for Education, the morning panel featured international experts who shared their thoughts on the shift towards student-centred learning and how design thinking could play a role in this transformation.

Ilona Taimela, a Finnish Education Consultant pointed out that student participation is the premise of education in Finland, as required by the law. Finland is renowned for its Phenomenon Based Learning, whereby students learn in a student-centred, multi-disciplinary, collaborative and investigative way and where the entire city provides the learning environment. "We give children from the beginning, the joy of being themselves, designing their own path and being responsible," she emphasised.

Dr Kaleb Rashad, Creative Director of High Tech High Graduate School of Education said our education system suffered the crisis of ‘loss of joy’. To move from teacher-centred to student-centred learning, schools need organisational shifts with a different approach to leadership. Dr Kaleb called it a ‘liberatory leadership’, leading with a compelling collective vision, leading with culture and with the team.

Ada Wong, the Director of Ednovator, and supervisor of HKICC Lee Shau Kee School of Creativity, urged the audience to start making changes in a small way to give students the fun and motivation to learn.

The panellists and participants discussed amongst other things how we should re-think ‘examination’, which kills the joy of learning in Hong Kong.

Referring to Culatta’s comment that we cannot expect a fish to climb the tree, Taimela said “testing should not be conducted at the end of a school term, but students should be assessed at the beginning to enable personalised learning and supported with continuous assessments.”

The audience also learnt the powerful impact of design thinking on both students and teachers from seasoned practitioners through the case studies panels. “To implement design thinking, we change the habits of mind for my teaching team first,” said Joyce Chung, Principal of Catholic Mission School.

Tim Parker, Head of Product Design & Engineering at ESF Island School, said “Something that we’ve really changed our curriculum around is the idea of us not teaching from the front anymore, and not everybody doing the same project. It’s about students exploring different avenues.”

The majority of the forum participants are interested in learning how design thinking can be applied as pedagogy in different subjects. Henry Siu, Associate Head of Academic Affairs Committee, Good Hope School also shared how his school uses design thinking in motivating the girls to learn Mathematics.

Design thinking is about doing. There were various workshops to enable participants to have hands-on experience to learn the basics of design thinking, how it could be applied in project-based learning and STEAM education in a student-centred and inexpensive way, and last but not least to bring joy back to teaching.



Unleash! Forum for Educators was kicked off by our honorable guests. (From left to right) Mr Stuart Bailey, Founder & CEO of Bailey Communications, Ms Ada Wong, Director of Ednovators and Supervisor of HKICC Lee Shau Kee School of Creativity, Mr Jeff Sze, Political Assistant to Secretary for Education Hong Kong SAR Government, Mr Richard Culatta, CEO, International Society for Technology Education, Professor Eric Yim, Chairman of Board of Director of Hong Kong Design Centre, Mr Victor Cheng, Executive Director of HKEd City, Ms Ilona Taimela, Education Consultant of Helsinki Education Consulting Group, Dr Edmund Lee, Executive Director of Hong Kong Design Centre, Ms Peggy Law, Acting Assistant Head of Create Hong Kong)



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During the panel discussion session, local & international experts share the trend shifting to student-centred approach. (Picture: from left to right: Mr Jeff Sze, Political Assistant to Secretary for Education Hong Kong SAR Government; Ms Ilona Taimela, Education Consultant of Helsinki Education Consulting Group; Ms Ada Wong, Director of Ednovators and Supervisor of HKICC Lee Shau Kee School of Creativity)



Dr Kaleb Rashad, Director of Creative Leadership of High Tech High Graduate School of Education in USA has video conference with us and shared his insights in the panel discussion.



Participants had hands-on experience to learn the basics of design thinking and bring joy back to teaching.

About the Hong Kong Design Centre

Founded in 2001, the Hong Kong Design Centre promotes design thinking - a human-centred approach to creative problem solving - to create business value and improve the well-being of society. The 'Unleash! Empowered by Design Thinking' programme is sponsored by CreateHK, a unit of the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau, pursuant to the Chief Executive's policy directive to propel the application of design thinking across different sectors in Hong Kong.