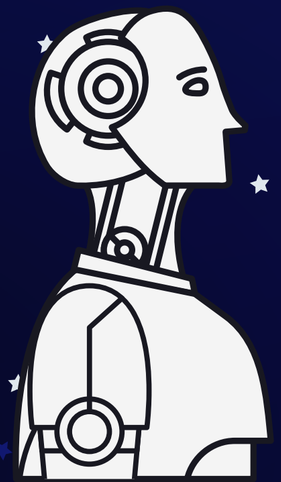
Human Flourishing through **Transformative Experience Design (TED)**: Learning and Talent Development in the Technological Age

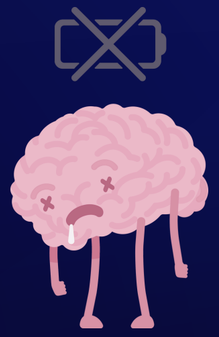
Rayan Magon

Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences,Villanova University

The Technological Age: The Technocene?

- What does this mean for our l development?
- Godlike Powers, Human D Godhood):Freud warned that more control ≠ happiness. lack fulfillment; Constant connectivity and control ex onnections and purpose.
- Tech Shapes Us; Not Jus
  - Digital tools mediate h , and even define ourselves.





Mental Health [1]

Social Connections [2]

Meaningful Work [3]

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From Sci-Fi to Reality

Paradox of Flourishing and Fear

"Fear is negative wonder." — John O'Donohue [4]

Existential Concerns and Progress; Unconscious Projections:
In our envisioned future, cyborgs, cybernetics, and transhumanism blurs human-machine boundaries, raising questions about identity and what it means to be human.

Can we design tech and tech spaces not just to function, but to fulfill? If so, how?
To supplement, rather than supplant, our human development and promote Digital Well-being through Human-Computer Interactions

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Background

- **Subjective Well-Being (SWB) and Digital Flourishing** (self-assessment *of cognitive-affective experiences, such as positive affect, life satisfaction, and meaning in life*)

What would it even look like to achieve the best possible state of well-being and flourishing when engaged with tech?

Creating a Learning Society Beyond Prioritizing "Human Capital"
- *UNESCO 1972 report: from "learning to be" to "learning to be productive and employable" [13]*

The Good Life & Eudaimonia [5]

Beliefs about Science and Technology: *Setting relevant goals [8]*

Self-Actualization, Transcendence and Purpose [7]

Fear into Wonder [6]

Aligning with values of Truth, Goodness & Beauty [9]

Engagement and Intrinsic Motivation [11]

Preserving Human Capabilities:
Tool not a crutch in human potential development [10]

Humanistic Focus and Human Centered Design [12]

What Does it Look like Now?

Digital Well-Being is often framed as the absence of phone addiction or bad tech habits [14]—not optimal experience.

General well-being is seen as “optimal psychological experience and functioning,” not absence of -ve states [15, 16]

Addiction Isn’t So Simple: It's not a stable condition, and may reflect diverse patterns of use.

- Screen Time ≠ Meaningful Time [17]

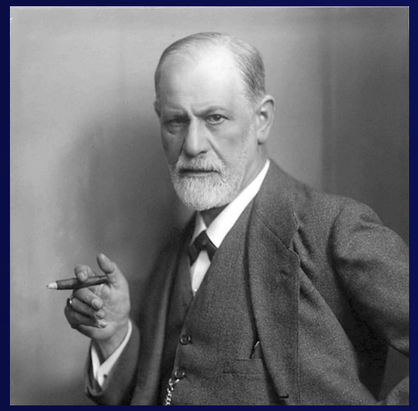
From Deficit Model to Optimal Engagement

Every generation fears the next generation’s tools:
But the fear of burning shouldn’t keep us from learning to tend the fire?

@quickies_comic

Problems: Philosophical Perspectives and the Modern Challenge

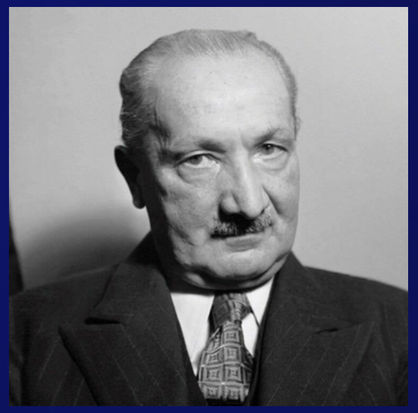
Freud's views on technology and human well-being: *Civilization and Discontents*



Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent; but those organs have not grown on to him and they still give him much trouble at times. [18]

Challenge: *Mastery over nature and greater comfort, but more psychic repression required for civilization. Increased inner conflict, guilt, and discontent.*

Heidegger and the dangers of Technology:
The Question Concerning Technology



But enframing does not simply endanger man in his relationship to himself and to everything that is. As a destining, it banishes man into the kind of revealing that is an ordering. Where this ordering holds sway, it drives out every other possibility of revealing. Above all, enframing conceals that revealing which, in the sense of poiesis, lets what presences come forth into appearance [19].

Challenge: *The danger of technology lies not in the tools themselves, a mindset that reduces the world/humans to resources to exploit. This alienates us from authentic existence and risks making us servants of machines. Only by seeing this can we recover a more meaningful relationship with tech.*

Problems: Philosophical Perspectives and the Modern Challenge (cont.)

Adorno on Unfreedom: *Problems of moral philosophy*

The individual could only become free in a free society, but hitherto he has constantly experienced the social constitution as something opposed, antagonistic to himself; he has experienced it as heteronomous... [20]

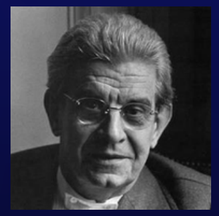
- **Challenge**: Under capitalism, technology often serves control and efficiency, not freedom.
- AI management, surveillance, and market-driven education erode autonomy and meaningful work.

Deleuze and Guattari : *Anti-Oedipus* & *A thousand plateaus.*

Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is, rather, the subject that is missing in desire, or desire that lacks a fixed subject; there is no fixed subject unless there is repression. Desire and its object are one and the same thing: the machine, as a machine of a machine. Desire is a machine, and the object of desire is another machine connected to it...Lack is a countereffect of desire ". [21]

- **Challenge**: *Desire becomes the mechanical motor of social production, constantly attaching itself to shifting objects that are quickly rendered obsolete, but itself lacks nothing.*

Lacan and the Signifier



- **Challenge**: Desire is shaped by language and norms that define what we lack and pursue.
- Technology intensifies this by commodifying desire, offering endless promises of fulfillment and jouissance that only deepen dissatisfaction and deferral.

Problems: From Theory to Praxis

Ethical Considerations in Human Computer Interactions

1. In the attention economy, technologies are deliberately engineered to be addictive [22]. It's a billion dollar industry working exactly as it's designed.

2. This design is not neutral; it is objectionably exploitative, as it manipulates behavior in ways that undermine autonomy, well-being, and meaningful engagement with the world [23].

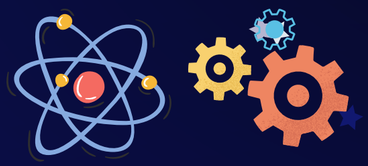
3. The ethical challenge is to rethink how technology is integrated into life, ensuring it supports human flourishing rather than reducing individuals to market-driven outcomes/human ‘capital’. Broader context of business ethics.

A Learning Society/Lifelong Learning in The Attention Enconomy

1. A review shows lifelong learning and talent development, though vital for fostering a productive, adaptable workforce, are mostly framed in terms of economic efficiency [24].

2. Lifelong learning has shifted from UNESCO’s vision of helping individuals “become themselves” [25] to what Biesta calls “learning to be productive and employable” [26].

Problems: From Theory to Praxis (cont.)



Beliefs about Science and Technology

1. Research shows that in cultures with a strong technological focus, beliefs about technology and science influence Subjective Well-Being (SWB) [27]. Belief in progress allows people to have a sense of compensatory control [28].

2. Though, what do we mean by progress? An empty signifier or progress as collective human flourishing?

3. Belief in scientific-technological progress positively predicts life satisfaction [29]. How do we change these?

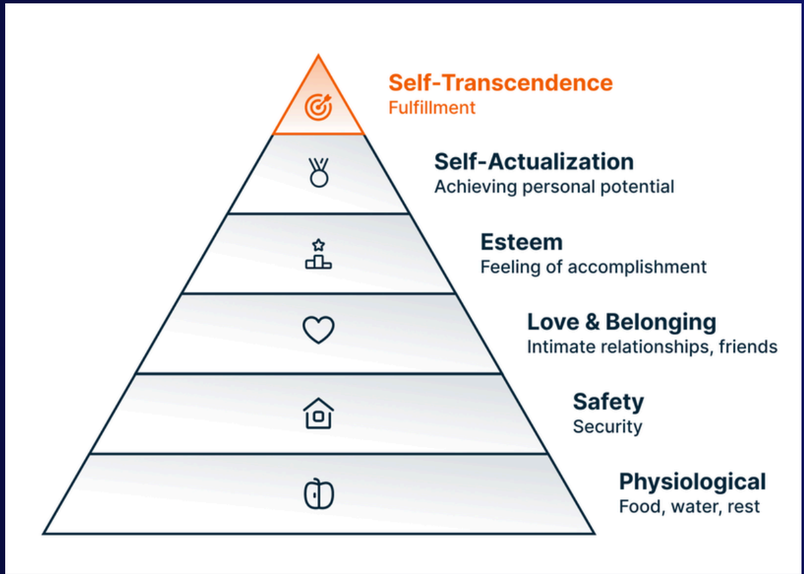
Meaningful Work and Authentic Talent Development in Education

1. Talent development in education labels "gifted" students based on high IQ, reinforcing narrow definitions of potential as this is tied to later academic [30] and workforce performance [31]

2. Question of Meaningful Work remains unresolved. Whether or not that productivity is related to individuals' sense of meaning, fulfillment, and flourishing doesn't arise [32]. Continuous upskilling to remain relevant in the workforce.

Goals: The Human Flourishing and Humanistic Project

- We've talked about flourishing, but what is it? and how do we achieve it?



- **Self-actualization** is at the pinnacle of personal growth, where individuals move beyond basic survival and social needs to realize their fullest potential.
- **Self-transcendence** is needed for self-actualization, as Frankl [33] said it is a side effect of transcending the self in service of a greater purpose, others, fulfilling oneself by going beyond the self.

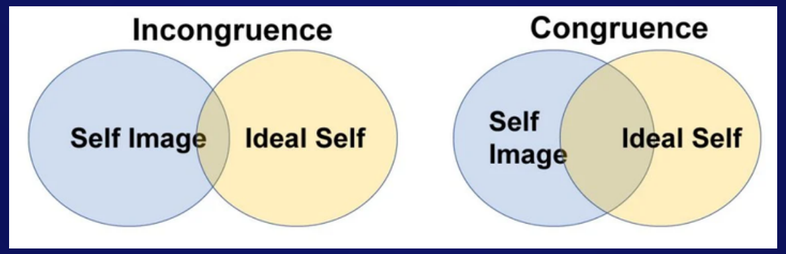
What does it mean to be fulfilled, actualized by learning and developing meaningfully?

Like lifelong learning, self-actualization and self-transcendence are ongoing processes. Learning, shaped by personal perspectives and lived experience, enables individuals to adapt, grow, and contribute meaningfully. A true learning society integrates technology thoughtfully to support human flourishing, not just productivity.

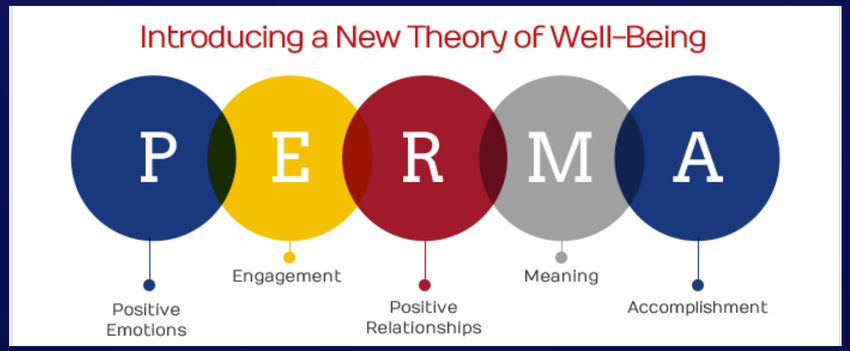
Goals: Theories and Praxis

Theories

- **Carl Rogers** emphasized the need for authentic, empathetic environments that support personal growth through alignment of the **ideal** and **actual** self [34]



- Seligman's [35] **PERMA** model of human flourishing:



- Deci & Ryan's [36] **SDT** identifies **autonomy, competence, and relatedness** as essential for intrinsic motivation and meaningful development.

Goals: Theories and Praxis

Theories

DABROWSKI'S **THEORY OF POSITIVE DISINTEGRATION** AND **OVEREXCITABILITIES**

- Dąbrowski's **TPD** sees inner conflict and emotional intensity not as dysfunction, but as catalysts for personal growth toward autonomy and authenticity [35]

- **Overexcitabilities** (emotional, intellectual, imaginational, etc.) are heightened sensitivities to stimuli, which lead to transformative experiences [35, 36]. How do we trigger these?

- The **third factor**, an auto-telic drive toward one's higher values (beyond socialization and self-gratification), mirrors the core of transformative learning and is foundational in talent development [35].

- By embracing disintegration as a creative and necessary process, we can design learning ecosystems that support not just performance, but the emergence of purpose-driven, meaning-oriented individuals.

Goals: Theories and Praxis

Praxis

HUMAN CENTERED DESIGN (HCD) VS TECHNOLOGY CENTERED DESIGN

- Starts with **human needs, values, and aspirations**
- Prioritizes **learner autonomy, creativity, emotional support, and engagement.**
- Designs learning environments that nurture passion and meaningful growth and Fosters workplace collaboration, well-being, and purpose beyond productivity.

- Begins with **what the technology can do:** efficiency, automation, and data collection.
- Often **sidelines the user's experience**, reducing individuals to data points or productivity units.
- In education, standardized testing, tracking, and monitoring are emphasized. The workplace, often optimizes for surveillance, performance metrics, etc. at the expense of morale or creativity.

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Solution?

TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE DESIGN (TED)

But what Are Transformative Experiences (TEs) and Why Design for Them?

🌌 L.A. Paul defines TEs as experiences whose value cannot be known in advance, yet once lived
→ profoundly reshape and result in lasting shifts in perspective and self [37]

William James: TEs rupture "ordinary consciousness," revealing unseen forms of awareness. These are lived encounters that shakes the snow globe of one's known world.

"*Our normal waking consciousness... is but one special type.*" [38]

- Piaget: TEs trigger **accommodation,** reshaping mental-frameworks, not just learn facts.
- Linked to **awe** as a driver of cognitive restructuring.
- TEs fuel personal evolution by **challenging core assumptions.**

Maslow's concept of PEAK EXPERIENCE [39, 40]

ZPD and Flow [41, 42]

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Solution?

TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE DESIGN (TED)

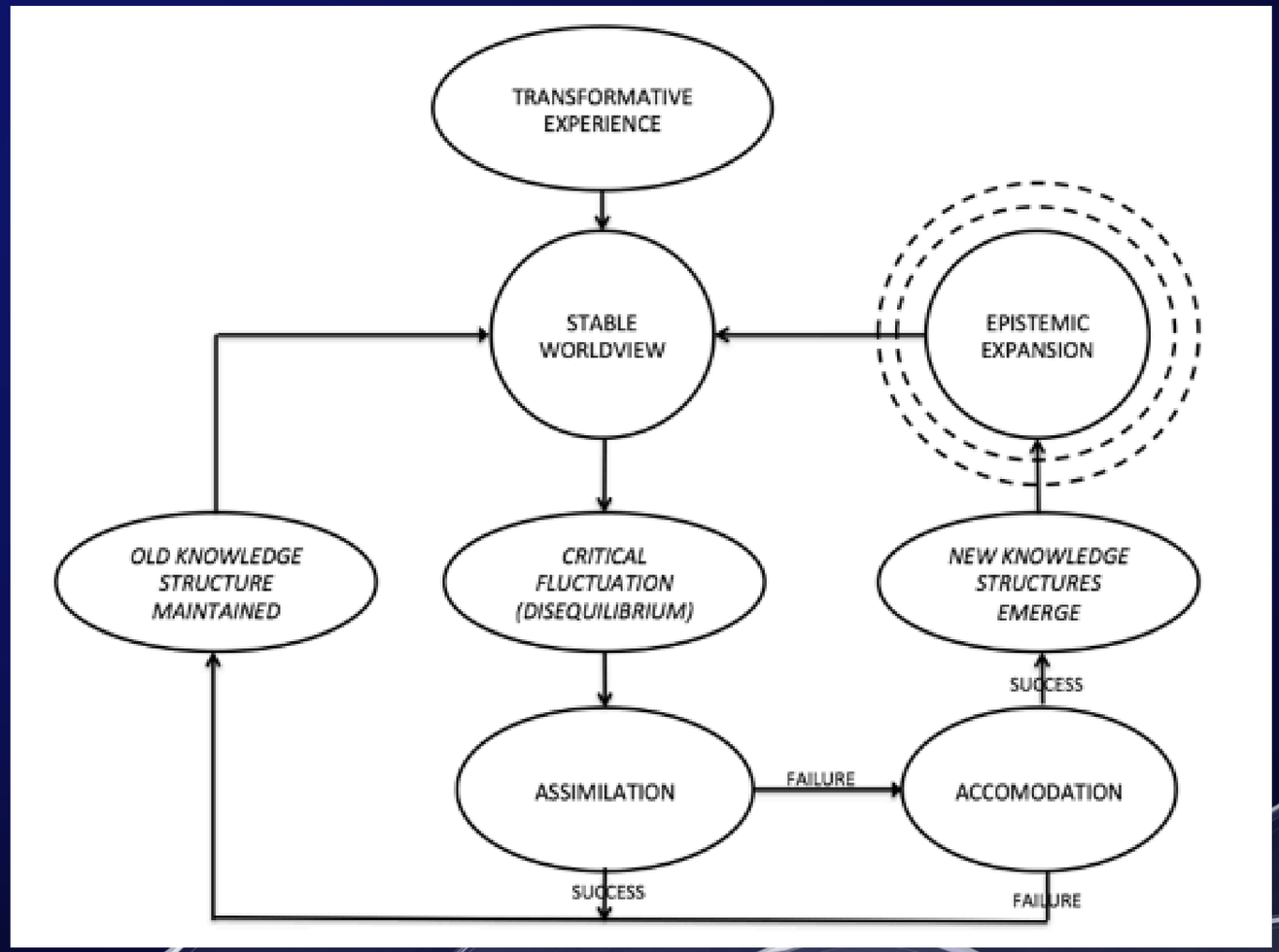
Some Background

Epistemic Emotions: Awe, Curiosity, Wonder, etc.

These emotions disrupt equilibrium, creating the disequilibrium necessary for assimilation and accommodation: key processes that lead to epistemic expansion

E.G.,

- Spark curiosity with open-ended, inquiry-based challenges.
- Foster wonder through complex, real-world problems
- Induce awe with immersive, perspective-shifting experiences.



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Solution?

TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE DESIGN (TED)

(Gaggioli, 2021)

TED is ≠ TED Talks (Technology Entertainment Design)

TED = Transformative Experience Design grounded in Dewey's experiential learning theory.

Transformative Affordances: Build on the concept of Technological Affordances.
Technology can offer invitations to act that elicit meaning-making, not just functionality.

TEs cannot be forced

E.G., *A chair is an invitation to sit*

Voluntary vs involuntary TEs?

- On **Virtual Reality & Immersion**:

Medium alone ≠ transformation
Meaningful content + Deep immersion = TE potential.

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Solution?

Transformative Experience Design (TED)

Why now?

- Edu-tainment Platforms like LinkedIn Learning offer accessible content but suffer high dropout rates.
- Short, modular courses and badges don't foster deep learning or intrinsic motivation.
- True transformative growth requires personalized, challenging, and reflective learning experiences.
- Simulations & Serious Games: Immersive, role-based learning (e.g., scientist, policymaker) supports identity exploration and situated cognition in feedback-rich, low-stakes environments—aligning with Dewey's vision of learning through meaningful experience.
- Creative Epistemic Tools: Platforms like digital music studios, 3D modeling, and interactive storytelling promote epistemic agency and self-expression. Aesthetic media encounters can foster self-transcendence and deeper meaning-making.
- Collaborative Knowledge Building: Co-learning environments support shared inquiry, dialogue, and identity co-construction, reinforcing Dewey's emphasis on learning as a social, transformative act.

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Solution?

Transformative Experience Design (TED)

Example:

- Adventure Learning (AL): Real-world explorations (e.g., Arctic Transect) + real-time digital media + collaborative platforms → immersive, inquiry-based learning. Mirrors models like Quest to Learn (game-based, quest-driven curriculum).

Key Features:

Engagement Over Completion

Transformative Learning triggered:

- TEs often triggered by disorienting dilemmas—challenges to meaning perspectives → critical reflection → epistemic shift. Digital aesthetic experiences (music, narrative, social media) can be paths to self-transcendence and flourishing.
- Final Principle: Technology is intentionally designed to align with humanistic goals.

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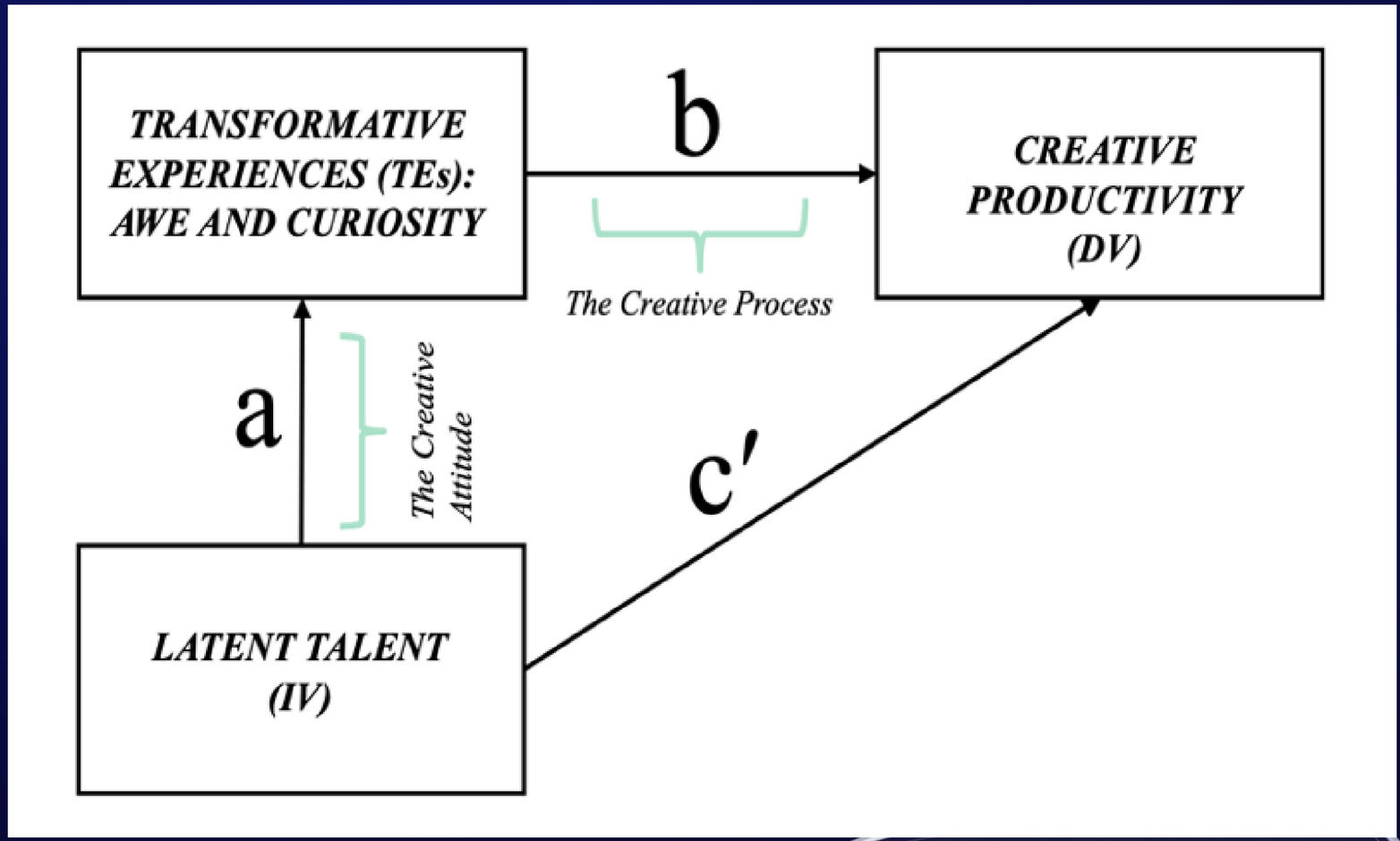
Solution?

TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE DESIGN (TED)

Mediation in Creativity and Talent Development



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BRAINSTORMING PROMPTS

- Imagine a learning experience that completely changes how someone sees themselves. What does it look like?

  What small design shifts could make learning feel more meaningful and deeply connected to life beyond the classroom or job?

- What moments or activities naturally spark awe, wonder, or curiosity in your own life? How can we replicate those in tech-enhanced learning environments?

- In what ways can learners become active creators of their own transformative journeys, rather than passive recipients of a training/program?

  If technology could be your co-designer for transformation, what surprising or unconventional tools or approaches would you want to use?

- What barriers keep learners from experiencing transformation today, and how can we design around or through them? Emotional blockages? Fears?

  How can TED honor diverse cultural values and identities while fostering shared human flourishing?

Final Activity: Scenario Based Design

- Form small groups of 3-5: I'll join from time to time
- Pick one prompt from the list presented next or come up with your own.
- Use sticky notes, sketching, or mind maps to capture wild ideas.
- Think about who the learner is, what emotions you want to evoke, and how technology can enable the journey.
- After 15 minutes, each group selects a "big idea" to share: focus on the why and the how of transformation.

LIST OF SCENARIOS

1. Transformatively Onboarding New Employees

- Maybe create immersive, tech-enhanced onboarding to spark curiosity, identity shift, and connection to purpose?

2. TED Learning Module for High School Science

- Maybe design role-based projects using digital tools to make science meaningful, fostering wonder and agency?

3. Lifelong Learning Program for Career Transitioners

- Maybe develop personalized, adaptive learning pathways with storytelling and peer mentoring for identity renewal?

4. Community Learning for Social Change

- Build interactive experiences that cultivate empathy, dialogue, and collective action for climate justice.

Thank You