

Teaching Peace: place-making for digital curricula

Dr Anna Troisi



UNESCO Inclusive Policy Lab

In the past year and half at the BSc Creative Computing we moved the majority of our teaching online due to the pandemic. We developed a pedagogy strategy with students as agents of their curriculum. In the project, I applied an iterative co-inquiry strategy that involves staff, students and Representatives. The need for all parties to collaborate more was clear, but the online environment was not ready, so with the aim of forging a change in the environment while facilitating collaborations between staff and students, we created something bigger:

a place for peace, justice and equity.

Life-enriching online environments for higher education

We adopted a communication framework (process language) called **Non-Violent Communication**. NVC was introduced by Mahatma Gandhi (Ziegler, 2014) and developed later by Marshall Rosenberg in the 70s. Marshall Rosenberg is known as a pioneer in nonviolent conflict resolution. In his career he developed and applied nonviolent communication for 40 years helping communities, disadvantaged groups and individuals to focus on partnership, caring and empathy. NVC focuses attention on:

- 1) The feelings and needs motivating each person
- 2) What actions might best meet their needs at no one else's expenses (Rosenberg, Eisler 2003).

The research project focuses on the areas students and staff engage the most have a common denominator: **improving themselves and their condition of life**. The approach that led to students' satisfaction improvement from 50% to 90%.

This forged a new level of resilience both for staff and students which shows how embracing uncertainty as an opportunity and not as a challenge has scope for community growth. Forging direct collaboration with the students bought the development of an adapted pedagogy model, assessment adjustments, inclusive practices, attention for mental health issues and renewed engagement. The fact that students can contextualise requests for changes gives them the responsibility and the right level of engagement that is required for this course. Members of staff reported feeling part of the growing community and remained flexible as students' requests were reasonable and open to be discussed looking for compromises.

I felt that all my needs are met, and as an online course, I feel very involved and excited about my studies! All the teachers have been great so far and I really respect trials like reaching out to the students and gauging their thoughts and feelings about their course. Thank you for taking the time to hear us (a student).

