

# *Lawyers' creative confidence and thinking ability: the significance of design thinking in legal education*

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**Abstract:** Law schools around the world are increasingly recognizing the importance of integrating design thinking into their curricula in order to equip graduates with the human-centered skills and ways of thinking needed for the jobs of the future. Research in recent years has investigated design thinking pedagogy in higher education, but further empirical research is needed to understand the perspectives of law school educators and learners. We conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with design thinking educators in Anhui Law School to investigate their experience and meaning construction of design thinking pedagogy with specific application cases. While the findings of this study cannot be specifically generalized, this research allows us to draw preliminary conclusions about how design thinking can be used to approach legal skills teaching. Participants in this study believe that design thinking pedagogy can develop empathy, creative and innovative thinking skills as an alternative to the traditional institutionalized way of training lawyers. They also believe it enables people-centered problem solving, fosters creative confidence, and enables alternative ways of thinking. Law students must develop different ways of thinking to prepare them for the future of the legal profession. Incorporating design thinking pedagogy into law courses has the potential to help graduate lawyers navigate complex legal issues with fewer constraints, develop emotional intelligence, increase resilience, overcome fear of failure, and work better together in multidisciplinary contexts.

## **1. Introduction**

Over the past decade, many law schools around the world have introduced the cultivation of design thinking research. This study seeks to understand how educators (including lecturers, teachers, counsellors, coaches, academics, and unit coordinators) experience, perceive, and understand design thinking pedagogy, and the impact of this pedagogy on college students' thinking courses. To investigate this further, we interviewed six educators at the Anhui University of Finance and Economics Law School, each of whom had three or more years of experience teaching design thinking. We used interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to analyze their interview transcripts. We found that participating legal educators understood design thinking pedagogies as developing empathy, creative, and innovative thinking skills as an alternative to traditional institutionalized approaches to lawyer training. This paper first summarizes

the traditional legal education methods, then discusses the application of design thinking teaching method in legal education and its relevance to future work, then introduces the IPA method and the object of this study, then shows our findings and analysis of interviews with design thinking educators, and finally expounds the conclusions and significance of this study. This study allows us to draw preliminary conclusions about the use of design thinking in skill teaching and to enrich the existing literature by deepening our understanding of design thinking pedagogy in the context of legal education.

## **2. Literature review**

In this section, we review the literature on the limitations of traditional legal education, the definition and evolution of design thinking, its relevance in legal contexts and future work, and its potential as a teaching method. We also highlight the need for further research to explore design thinking pedagogy in the specific context of legal education.

### **2.1. Limitations of traditional legal education**

The hallmark of legal education is learning to "think like a lawyer." The traditional approach, based on the Socratic method and case-based teaching, requires students to analyze pre-assigned cases and problems and follow a structured approach to legal problem solving that includes identifying legal problems, stating relevant laws, applying laws to scenarios, and drawing conclusions<sup>[1]</sup>. The law curriculum generally operates in the realm of knowledge and reasoning, rather than in the more emotion-based realm of emotion, which means that it largely "ignores the influence of feelings, attitudes and values in the learning process." <sup>[2]</sup> Traditional approaches typically operate in the domain of knowledge and reasoning, while ignoring the affective domain, the influence of feelings, attitudes and values in the learning process. This means that law school students are taught to detangle themselves from the human and emotional dimensions and focus only on principles and legislation to advocate for alternative outcomes based on the political party they represent. Even with the adoption of critical thinking and socio-legal analysis, the dichotomy between reasoning and the human dimension of the problem persists<sup>[3]</sup>.

However, the ongoing transformation of the legal profession now requires a more sophisticated approach from lawyers that can adapt to the human and emotional dimensions of solving complex legal issues. There is a growing recognition of the limitations of highly specialised disciplines such as law, which cannot solve problems alone. Instead, there is a growing global trend towards solving multidisciplinary problems and the need for complex generalists with cross-disciplinary knowledge and innovation. Design thinking pedagogy offers great potential to support the development of complex generalists by promoting innovation and creative outcomes across disciplines. It also promotes "meta-disciplinary collaboration" as a potentially all-encompassing approach to experiential learning that fosters empathy, creative and innovative thinking skills as an alternative to the traditional institutionalized way lawyers are trained.

### **2.2. What is Design Thinking?**

The term "design thinking" originated in the early 1900s and originally referred to the thinking behind designing products. Over time, it has evolved to encompass a variety of interpretations, including processes, methods, toolkits, mindsets, or ways of working. While it was originally associated with design and architecture, it has expanded into other industries and disciplines, such as business, technology, government services and law<sup>[4]</sup>. Today, "design thinking" is considered "an exciting new paradigm" that uses designers' "sensitivity and approach to match people's needs with

what is technically feasible and commercially feasible." It uses intuition, pattern recognition, emotional meaning, and non-verbal expression to provide "a powerful methodology that integrates human, business, and technical factors into the process of problem formation, resolution, and resolution." In a legal context, design thinking (also known as "legal design" and closely related to "human-centered design") provides a creative, human-centered approach to solving complex legal problems.

### **2.3. Design thinking for future legal work**

By 2030, more than two-thirds of jobs are expected to be skills-intensive. A 2021 survey of 15 provinces identified 56 skills needed for the jobs of the future, including cognitive skills, interpersonal skills, self-leadership and digital skills. Of these skills, 31 align with the core competencies of design thinking, such as empathy, creativity and imagination, collaboration, courage and risk-taking, agile thinking, and coping with uncertainty. In the legal field, lawyers need human skills such as creativity, customer service, caring for others, and collaboration, innovative problem solving, and new ways of thinking, including data-oriented thinking and agile systems, all of which are fundamental to design thinking. For these reasons, it is suggested that law students must develop different ways of thinking to prepare for the future of the legal profession.

Through the emergence of new legal roles such as legal designer, and the projected expansion of other legal positions such as head of client experience, head of innovation, legal innovation facilitator, or head of legal client, there is a growing demand for lawyers with design thinking skills. Success. Graduates of Anhui University of Finance and Economics' own Legal and Design Thinking unit (which teaches students to think differently about law, legal services, access to justice, start-ups, technology, innovation and entrepreneurship) report that their legal design skills and experience are in considerable demand. The workplace. Graduates also reported that the unit enabled them to improve emotional awareness, empathy, complex reasoning, creative problem solving, and dynamic social intelligence<sup>[5]</sup>.

Design thinking is used globally in the field of legal services, such as the creation and delivery of legal advice, the management of legal practice, the enhancement of attorney-client communication, and the exploration of remedies within the justice system. Examples of legal design strategies include applying design thinking to damage claims filed by workers against employers, designing accessible online dispute resolution platforms, designing user-friendly document automation tools, and improving the accessibility of free online legal information.

### **2.4. Design thinking pedagogy and legal education**

By adopting a design thinking pedagogy, law schools can help students approach legal challenges from a fresh perspective, fostering innovative and empathetic solutions to meet the complex and changing needs of clients and society. Research that focuses on design thinking pedagogy in legal education is limited, but it is useful to consider it in the broader context of higher education, much of which has emerged in the last decade. Existing research focuses on design thinking as the development of skills and competencies such as creative problem solving, creative confidence, people orientation, innovation and impact, and collaboration. Others focus on how design thinking underpins student learning and supports student-centered attitudes in the classroom.

Design thinking pedagogy can be used in teaching and learning to help students develop the skills needed to meet the challenges of the 21st century. It fosters learners' abilities through iterative problem solving, promoting ambiguity, collaboration, constructiveness, curiosity, empathy, wholeness, iterative, non-judgmental approach, and openness. It is described as a "model for enhancing creativity, endurance, engagement and innovation." It is also said to support "innovation

and creative outcomes across multiple disciplines," promote "meta-disciplinary collaboration" and enhance "interdisciplinary collaboration of creativity," and provide a "holistic approach to experiential learning."

While the potential benefits of design thinking pedagogy seem enormous, implementing design thinking pedagogy is not without challenges. Higher education programs are finding it difficult to keep up with the rapid spread of design thinking and the changing industry environment. This can lead to delays and costs associated with developing new programs, building reputations, gaining support and approval, creating courses, and ensuring that academics have the skills and knowledge needed to teach these courses.

There is a growing literature on the role of design thinking in law and legal design, however, more work needs to be done to better understand the potential of design thinking pedagogy to change the way law is taught. A wide area. With this background in mind, and drawing on our literature review and relevant prior research, we ask the following research questions: How do educators in law schools experience, perceive, and understand design thinking pedagogy? Through our specific application cases, this study aims to gain insight into legal educators' understanding of design thinking pedagogy, its practical implementation, its impact on teaching and learning, and its potential impact on the law curriculum.

### 3. Method

This article highlights the first phase of our three-stage research project, in which we conducted interviews with legal design thinking educators at Anhui University of Finance and Economics as a concrete application case. In the second phase, we will interview students who have completed studies in law and design thinking at Anhui University of Finance and Economics to gain a deeper understanding of the unique experiences of legal educators and students. In the third phase, we will interview design thinking law educators from law schools and conduct a comparative analysis. Ultimately, this study aims to examine the broader impact of design thinking pedagogy in legal education by integrating data from all three phases of our study. In this section, we provide an overview of the IPA, describe the participant selection process in this study, outline our data collection and analysis methods, present our results, and address the credibility, reliability, and transferability of our study.

#### 3.1. Interpretative phenomenological analysis

IPA is a qualitative research method that explores personal life experiences, what the experience means to the participant, and how the participant makes sense of that experience through a reflective interpretive process involving both the researcher and the participant. It recognizes that people perceive the world in very different ways, depending on personality, prior life experiences, and motivation. In higher education, the benefits of IPA include its potential to understand deep personal meaning and experiential aspects of learning and teaching. The use of IPA lends itself to the study of design thinking pedagogy in legal education because of its emphasis on understanding and interpreting personal experience. This analytical approach allows researchers to delve into participants' subjective perspectives, reveal the complexities and advantages of design thinking pedagogy, and gain insight into its transformative potential in legal education.

In this study, we explore the personal meaning, experience and meaning construction of design thinking pedagogy by legal educators. The term experience recognizes that understanding is determined by particular situations and circumstances or the personality of an individual. Meaning making is used as the action or process of making sense of or giving meaning to teaching and learning, especially in the context of instructional development or new experiences. Design thinking

pedagogy involves the theory and practice of design thinking teaching, including strategies, actions, and judgments that inform course design and delivery.

### 3.2. Participant

To select participants, we contacted all five design thinking educators who had taught law and Design thinking in the undergraduate unit at Anhui University of Finance and Economics, and all of them agreed to participate in the interview. After receiving their expressions of interest, we recruited them through an official email newsletter without any screening. Following IPA principles, our approach allows us to collect qualitative data from a fairly homogeneous group of legal educators who share a common focus on design thinking teaching. Because IPA focuses on a detailed description of an individual's experience, the number of participants is generally low.

### 3.3. Data collection and analysis

To collect our data, interviewers conducted recorded interviews with all participants and transcribed them verbatim. The unit coordinator was interviewed twice: once like the other participants and then on a computer screen displaying the learning management system and presenting the curriculum and teaching materials. Computer screen recordings were used as an additional guide to participant descriptions. Interviewers used a consistent semi-structured, open-ended question guide for all participants, Topics covered include legal educators' background and teaching experience in design thinking, their definition of design thinking, philosophical positions, concepts of being a design thinker, the importance of design thinking in legal education, teaching content, unit structure and delivery, and observations on student learning and engagement. Participants are encouraged to provide specific examples in the interview.

Our IPA analysis was interviewee led and cross-checked by two other researchers. This includes reading and rereading written records, making descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual symbols, developing emerging themes, and identifying connections between themes.

### 3.4. Result

As shown in Table 1, we identified 1 Superordinate topic and 5 lower topics. In our discussion, we mainly focus on our Superordinate topics as well as the lower topics B and C, which are probably of most interest to readers of this journal.

Table 1: Superordinate and subordinate themes.

Superordinate theme: Design thinking pedagogy sensed as developing empathic, creative, and innovative thinking skills as an alternative to the traditional institutionalised way of producing lawyers				
Example column 2				
Subordinate theme A	Subordinate theme B	Subordinate theme C	Subordinate theme D	Subordinate theme E
Design thinking pedagogy sensed as enabling human centred and empathic problem solving	Design thinking pedagogy sensed as developing creative confidence in a safe-to-fail environment	Design thinking pedagogy sensed as enabling an alternative mindset and way of thinking	Design thinking pedagogy sensed as developing learner engagement with a deep understanding of the problem	Design thinking pedagogy sensed as providing an innovative and entrepreneurial approach to lawyering

### 3.5. Credibility, reliability and transferability

While qualitative research cannot be verified in the same way as quantitative research, we have taken steps to ensure confidence that our data is "likely to be accurate and appropriate." We conduct respondent verification by providing participants with the option to check their transcripts and benefit from having this study conducted within our institution. While "in-house research" has its drawbacks, its benefits include knowledge, interaction, and access.

Our in-depth knowledge and familiarity with the evolution and implementation of instructional design thinking in the Law School of Anhui University of Finance and Economics provided a solid basis for our in-depth review of the interview transcripts and drawing conclusions. In terms of interaction, since participants in this study are already familiar with us as researchers, they are willing to participate in the research and share their experiences.

As mentioned earlier, in order to mitigate subjectivity and bias in our "internal research," data collection and preliminary analysis are conducted by non-legal researchers. In terms of reliability, we clearly state our methodology, analysis, decision-making, and the process by which we reach our conclusions. To ensure transparency and consistency, we included several verbatim excerpts from participants' materials, thus "giving participants a voice in the project and allowing readers to examine the explanations made."

Given the small size of our qualitative study, it is important to clarify that the findings of this study cannot be generalized to all instances of design thinking pedagogy in legal education. Instead, this study allows us to draw preliminary conclusions about how design thinking can be used to teach skills. It attempts to show how design thinking pedagogy is experienced in the specific context of our application case to the School of Law at Anhui University of Finance and Economics. While the findings of this study are not representative of conditions that exist in other situations, we have attempted to provide enough information so that readers can judge how the findings of this study apply to similar situations. Future studies, especially Phase III, will also enable this comparison.

## 4. Research result

The results and discussion in this study mainly focus on the Superordinate topic and the lower topic B and C. For context purposes, we also provide summaries of the following topics A, D, and E.

### 4.1. Superordinate theme: Develop empathy, creativity and innovative thinking skills as an alternative to the traditional institutionalized way of training lawyers

In this overarching theme, educators argue that design thinking pedagogy can foster empathy, creative, and innovative thinking skills as an alternative to the traditional institutionalized way of training lawyers. The overarching theme of this study spans all five Subordinate themes, capturing the depth and complexity of design thinking pedagogy and its benefits for law students, lawyers, the future of law and work, and students as human beings. It combines flexibility, modeling thinking and behavior, a holistic understanding of the client, taking a contrarian approach to legal problems, real assessment in complex "messy" problems, developing skills for future problems, and empowering students as change-makers. In this context, the term authentic assessment refers to a well-thought-out assessment design that closely reflects the real-world "challenges and performance standards" encountered by professionals in the field.

Educators believe that the design thinking approach provides flexibility in teaching and supports students in solving legal problems. It goes beyond subject-based teaching principles to enable students to draw on their extensive legal knowledge and life experience. It provides a platform

where students can think: "Not what the law is, but what the law can be". In the teaching of design thinking, educators promote the use of empathy to fully understand the problem and the client. Unlike traditional legal approaches that focus on a client's legal issues, empathy allows for a deeper understanding of the client, potentially leading to innovative and sometimes non-legal solutions that better address their broader situation.

#### **4.2. Subordinate theme A: Achieving people-centered, empathetic problem solving**

In this subordinate theme, educators argue that design thinking pedagogy enables human-centered and empathetic problem solving. It emphasizes collaboration between educators and students and focuses on putting people at the center of lawyers' work and designing law. For example, one participant commented: "I think the problems people face are becoming more and more complex and sometimes the law feels like a rather blunt tool and design thinking opens up more solutions than legal problems." It's just applying the law." Educators also believe that design thinking teaching can develop a pool of open-minded professionals who think in multidisciplinary, empathetic, tolerant, and holistic ways. They distinguish it from other legal units because of its focus on developing creative, human-centered problem-solving skills.

#### **4.3. Subordinate theme B: Fostering creative confidence in a safe to fail environment**

In this subordinate theme, participants argue that design thinking pedagogy is about fostering creative confidence in a safe-to-fail environment. It allows students to reconnect with their creative selves, overcome discomfort and obstacles, promote cooperation rather than competition, and contain uncertainty, and this approach also supports students to develop emotional intelligence and build resilience, the ability to persevere, cope, or rebound.

Although educators believe that some students are more creative than others, design thinking teaching covers all levels of creativity. Educators believe that many law school students lose their childhood creativity by the time they enter college and consider themselves "uncreative." R. Hews once said, "If you're a creative person, you can master design thinking very quickly... If you don't have empathy, creativity and curiosity, then we have a lot of work to do." For some students, it's like a duck to water, needing to think differently, and it's actually quite fun.

Educators also argue that law students and lawyers may be prone to perfectionism, leading to discomfort and resistance to failure, which is a recognized problem in the practice of law. To address this, they employ a number of strategies to help students come to terms with the uncertain and often messy aspects of creativity, encouraging them to be comfortable with not knowing the exact solution from the start. As Educator 4 explains, students often ask, "Am I doing this right?" This is also a problem for lawyers, as is perfectionism, and design thinking is not about finding the perfect solution up front. The key is to put them all out there and find things that are relevant to you in the ideation process, bringing all sorts of different ideas together, and sometimes you get a little silly and think completely outside the box, like how would an elephant solve this problem? However, that's not something you [traditionally] do when you're addressing legal issues."

#### **4.4. Subordinate theme C: Achieving alternative ways of thinking and ways of thinking**

In this subordinate topic, which strongly positions itself in our superior topic, the design thinking pedagogy is supposed to enable an alternative way of thinking and thinking. It includes supporting students to raise awareness of existing ways of thinking, to develop alternative modes of thinking, to provide ways of thinking that complement existing legal thinking, to apply design thinking in a variety of contexts, and to embrace holistic reflection.

Educators believe that design thinking pedagogy can support students to develop an awareness of their existing ways of thinking and develop different ways of thinking about human-centered problems. This awareness enables students to move beyond traditional legal thinking to alternative approaches that better meet the needs of their clients. To develop awareness, educators encourage students to examine their existing ways of thinking before embracing new ones.

Educators also experience design thinking pedagogy as a "parallel universe." They are designed to expand students' understanding of different modes of thinking, enabling them to choose the most appropriate mode for any problem. Educator 2 explains, "I think it's kind of like when I first started learning design thinking, and I thought: There's a parallel world or parallel universe out there where people think differently than we do as lawyers. It sounds obvious, and probably bordering on silly. But we got a little stuck in our ways and forgot that there are other ways, we don't have to stick to this traditional legal approach."

Design thinking supports students to develop alternative ways of thinking, not only as a way of thinking, but also as a methodology. The approach guides students through a semi-structured creative journey where the steps themselves require a specific way of thinking. For example, a five-step design thinking process may result in a different way of thinking than a shorter lean startup type process.

#### **4.5. Subordinate Theme D: Develop learners' engagement in a deeper understanding of the problem**

In this subordinate theme, educators argue that design thinking pedagogy fosters learners' deep understanding of problems. This topic is closely related to subordinate topic B and enables people-centered, empathetic problem solving. Educators believe that design thinking pedagogy supports students to use empathy-based skills to understand complex issues more deeply. For example: "We run a range of different empathy activities to really help students develop an understanding of deep empathy, actually, to try to identify core issues, core motivations, core pain points, or what's going on more deeply, and how they shape the needs that we're trying to respond to." It's important that students spend a lot of time honing their skills in learning how to recognize these issues."

#### **4.6. Subordinate theme E: Legal approaches to providing innovative and entrepreneurial services**

In subordinate topic E, educators argue that design thinking pedagogy provides lawyers with an innovative and entrepreneurial approach, with a particular focus on legal services design. They see it as fostering entrepreneurship by supporting students to generate new ideas through the innovation process. This includes teaching students how to evaluate the desirability, feasibility, and feasibility of potential legal responses and teaching similar Lean startup methods. Educators also believe that design thinking pedagogy can improve the employability of student graduates, including developing their professional brand and career planning. For example: "We focus on employability, specifically supporting students to develop professional brands, and seek to identify how they can use design thinking skills in law and what this means for them to develop their careers."

### **5. Discuss**

This study examines how educators in law schools experience, perceive, and understand design thinking pedagogy. While the findings of this study are not universally applicable, in this section we will discuss how design thinking addresses gaps in traditional law curricula, including shifting aspects of legal education into the emotional realm. We identify how it humanizes law teaching and



supports students to develop emotional intelligence, increase resilience, diversify their thinking, gain creative confidence, and overcome their fear of failure. We discuss the rise of multidisciplinary problem solving and the value of design thinking versus traditional legal approaches, revealing its transformative potential in legal education and its implications for legal innovation and future work.

### **5.1. Alternative ways of thinking and thinking skills**

Participants in this study believe that design thinking pedagogy enables alternative ways of thinking and cultivates empathy, creativity and innovative thinking skills. In this way, design thinking pedagogy can potentially address gaps in traditional legal education by supporting students to transcend the limitations of rational thinking and legal reasoning and avoid more litigious and adversarial approaches. Design thinking also provides a valuable approach to interdisciplinary creative work, enabling multi-professional teams to establish common ground and perspectives. Legal education largely operates outside the realm of emotion, a "catch-all phrase" that covers all aspects of behavior, including: Self-concept, motivation, interests, attitudes, beliefs, values, self-esteem, ethics, self-development, emotions, need to achieve, sources of control, curiosity, creativity, independence, mental health, personal growth, group dynamics, mental image, and personality.

The design thinking approach, which focuses on empathy, creativity and innovative thinking skills, seems to harness emotions rather than suppress them. It provides real-world experiential learning that allows students to focus on humans and emotions while postponing the focus on solutions. This helps position students as human professionals, and the overlap between personal and professional value systems allows students to "emotionally control attention and facilitate memory" because they "actively care about what they are learning and its consequences." Design thinking has the potential to facilitate students to focus on the emotions of future clients as well as their own emotions, thereby promoting the development of emotional intelligence and resilience. This includes enhancing their understanding of existing ways of thinking, cultivating diverse thought patterns, and embracing their own holistic perspective

### **5.2. Creative confidence**

Participants in this study believe that design thinking pedagogy fosters creative confidence in a safe to fail environment. This may enhance the thinking skills of law school students and develop emotional intelligence and resilience. Creative confidence refers to "the natural ability to come up with new ideas and the courage to try them out." While it is said to be something we are born with, it may diminish over time due to socialization, formal education, analytical tendencies, and a fear of judgment, "messy unknowns," first steps, or loss of control. Creative confidence can also be understood as "the development of trust in one's own creative skills". In terms of learning, it is the repetition of design thinking that creates creative thinking, creative thinking that translates into creative action, and vice versa, both of which lead to confidence and ability to act creatively, "in short building creative confidence."

The findings of this study suggest that design thinking pedagogy can provide an environment that promotes creative confidence by encouraging play, making students feel "safe to break rules" and encouraging them to experiment. There is strong support for the inclusion of creative thinking and cross-disciplinary creativity in educational curricula, with play and games cited as tools to "enhance individual and collective creativity" by addressing the "cognitive, emotional and social dimensions of learning." Key elements of a game designed to be creative include the role of warm-up activities, generating a "good spirit" and engaging all players, including those with different knowledge, backgrounds and perspectives.

For the participants in this study, play and games provided an opportunity to reconnect with their

creative selves and break down discomfort and barriers. This reinforces the theory that educators don't necessarily need to teach students creativity, but rather help them rediscover creative confidence, overcome fears, and develop creativity through practice. This approach enables our students to develop their creative thinking and thinking, engage in creative performance, and in the process develop their creative confidence and competence. Design thinking also seems to help students overcome their fear of failure. The results of this study show that through practice, students are becoming more comfortable with the "messy" process of design thinking and not knowing the solution from the start. In a recent study, Allbon and Perry-Kessarlis similarly found that design thinking helped their students become: "more willing to experiment, rather than overthink"; More "awareness that the answers may lie anywhere and not just in textbooks and journal articles"; And more "freedom to try different ideas and be more open."

### 5.3. Design thinking in law curriculum

Universities are increasingly recognizing the benefits of embedding design thinking into their curricula as a means of encouraging collaborative teamwork, multidisciplinary learning, failure and experimentation, and enhancing innovation. This approach also prepares graduates for the jobs of the future by promoting creativity and problem solving, and enables them to tackle complex "messy" issues, such as access to justice initiatives. Educators considering incorporating design thinking pedagogy into their curriculum have a variety of implementation methods to choose from. They can choose a lighter intervention by incorporating specific elements of design thinking into existing units, or opt for a more holistic shift, such as reimagining an entire degree program. Between these two extremes exist many possibilities that enable educators to tailor the integration of design thinking to their educational background and goals.

Examples of how design thinking pedagogies have been implemented, embedded, or integrated into curricula include the development of university-wide majors and minors, joint bachelor's degrees, interdepartmental laboratories, multidisciplinary undergraduate design degrees, or graduate design programs. Other approaches include partnering with industry or incorporating work integrated learning, both of which help integrate real-world issues into the curriculum.

Some suggest promoting collaboration across campuses, faculty, or schools so that students (and potentially academics) can collaborate on co-design projects, industry-focused initiatives, or on-campus start-ups. It can also be embedded through elective or core units, extra-curricular opportunities, or through customised traditional law units. For example, students R. Hews et al may need to design user-friendly legal documents in contract law or create technology-based solutions in criminal law for access to justice. Finally, law schools may also invite scholars from other disciplines (such as design, business, information technology, engineering, or social justice) to provide input or work with students during design sprints or workshops.

Law schools must adapt their curricula to remain relevant and responsive, and support students to navigate the changing legal landscape by cultivating interdisciplinary knowledge and future readiness. To this end, Wrigley and Straker recommend developing a multidisciplinary design thinking curriculum using the Educational Design Ladder Framework, which specifically supports the design of multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary courses. Their approach provides a design thinking pedagogy in stages, gradually moving students from foundational learning (theory, methodology, and philosophy) to product or service design, design management, business strategy, and personal development and leadership. This type of curriculum integration transcends disciplinary boundaries and produces innovative, entrepreneurial graduates who are future-ready.

As universities have a responsibility to prepare their graduates for changing job demands, law

schools should not ignore the growing demand for the skills and ways of thinking that design thinking can provide. We strongly encourage law schools around the world to consider embedding or integrating design thinking pedagogy or its related components into their curricula to empower law students and enable them to address complex global challenges.

## 6. Conclusion

In this study, we sought to understand how law school educators experience, perceive, and understand design thinking pedagogy. Although the results of this study are not generalisable, we draw preliminary conclusions on how design thinking can be used to approach legal skills teaching. Legal educators who participated in this study believe that design thinking pedagogy can foster empathy, creative and innovative thinking skills as an alternative to traditional institutionalized ways of training lawyers. This enables students to develop a diverse way of thinking, creative confidence, a deeper understanding of complex problems, people-centred and empathetic problem solving, and an innovative and entrepreneurial outlook. It also seems to contribute to the rise of versatile generalists and multidisciplinary problem solvers who are expected to be influential change-makers tackling the complex challenges of the future.

As technology, automation, and artificial intelligence are reshaping the role of the lawyer, law students must develop different ways of thinking to prepare them for the future of the legal profession. To thrive in an ever-changing work environment, law students must embrace the power of multidisciplinary collaboration, foster creative thinking, develop emotional intelligence and resilience, and see uncertainty and failure as opportunities. The teaching method of design thinking provides a promising way to supplement traditional legal education and transcend the limitations of traditional legal thinking. For these reasons, we strongly encourage law schools worldwide to explore the possibility of embedding or integrating design thinking pedagogy or its related components into their curricula. By helping students transcend traditional boundaries and effectively meet the changing needs of individuals and society, we can help them navigate the ongoing transformation of the global legal profession.

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