

# SFDN 2023 CONFERENCE: “Going further together”

**TITLE:** Going further together: From practice to theory and back to practice...

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## **Abstract**

At any business school, the learning of content and the acquisition of competencies is the focus. In the past few decades, this focus has been met by introducing active learning settings that connect course content with specific contexts (Schneckenberg et al., 2010). For Auster et al. (2006), active learning needs a “collective environment where knowledge does not flow solely from instructor to students” (p. 338). This approach moved teacher-centered classes to student-centered courses. The communication that traditionally started and ended with the professor has expanded to the whole class, with questions being raised and answered by the community. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) understand that they need to do more than deliver knowledge; they must engage students in the course material to activate their knowledge (Becker et al., 2017; Deslauriers et al., 2019; Sarma & Yoquinto, 2020). However, how can we activate student knowledge, and how do we know we have achieved it?

For pedagogical experts, the response could lie in theory. For example, Benjamin Bloom published his Taxonomy of Educational Objectives in 1956, which has since become one of the best-known theories in pedagogy. As a result, it shifts the focus from teaching content to acquiring knowledge, forcing all teachers to formulate objectives to design their student’s learning. With Knowles in 1975, learning, especially self-directed learning, came into the center, describing it as a process where students control their learning by “diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes” (p. 18). Vygotsky followed in 1978 with the theory of social constructivism, which defined learning as a social activity. According to the constructivist model, learners help construct new knowledge by linking it to their existing knowledge. In a sense, they activate their own learning (Weegar et al., 2012).

In previous research, we proposed a metro map outlining important teaching, learning, and theoretic models for HEIs (Probst & Zizka, 2022). Using this map, faculty members can follow the teaching line to consider how to use the theory, the learning line, how to improve teaching, or the models’ line to know which theory to use and when. While experts tout new and more sustainable learning and teaching methods (Thomas & Ambrosini, 2021), we must understand the theories to make the best choices and know how to translate this knowledge into practice.

We’ll focus our Scholarly Discussion on the Metro Map for HEI and animate the debate on theory versus action in education. Traditionally, academic theory has been considered too dry or incomprehensible. Often, faculty members attend seminars or workshops seeking practical advice but not theoretical background. In this discussion, we will engage participants with theories that can be linked to the teaching and learning practices in HEIs.