Design Thinking for Quality VET Education Matching Labour Market Needs

VET Design Thinking Manual

A Handbook for managers, educators, program designers, researchers, and trainers in VET sector

Authors and main contributors:

Thomas Gkilias (MindmeUp), Konstantina Mataftsi (MindmeUp), Mohamed Sakr (Acceleras), Kristýna Strnadová (Know-House), Magdalena Hubená (Know-House), Marzena Beáta Oltean (VET Center Romania), Szabolcs Dolcsig (VET Center Romania), Thomas Blum (RegioVision GmbH Schwerin)

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Disclaimer:

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VET Design Project Consortium

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MindmeUp LP is an innovative consulting company based in Thessaloniki, Greece, specializing in innovation management, business development, and strategic marketing. It offers tailored solutions for businesses, startups, and NGOs across Europe. Services include EU funding management, training programs, and technology transfer, fostering sustainable growth and creative thinking. **Website:** https://mindmeup.com.gr/ **Email:** info@mindmeup.com.gr

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1. Brief Introduction to the Project

The **VETdesign** project, part of the Erasmus+ KA220-VET program, focuses on adapting vocational education and training (VET) to meet evolving labor market needs. By integrating Design Thinking methodologies and innovative tools like "EDUCkathons", it aims to enhance VET's relevance, flexibility, and innovation. The project will produce tailored manuals, practical workshops, and collaborative design circles to empower VET providers to create learner-centered and industry-relevant training programs. Spanning from 2024 to 2026, VETdesign seeks to transform vocational training into a dynamic, inclusive, and market-responsive sector, benefiting educators, managers, and learners across Europe.

Purpose and scope of the Design Thinking manual

The Design Thinking Manual aims to empower Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers by introducing a human-centered approach to designing and managing vocational programs. Its goal is to foster innovation, adaptability, and relevance in VET offerings, ensuring alignment with labor market demands and learners' needs. The manual targets VET managers, educators, and program designers, providing them with the tools to innovate and modernize training programs. It focuses on enhancing the flexibility, inclusivity, and responsiveness of VET systems to economic cycles, green and digital transitions, and emerging industry requirements. It serves as a practical resource to drive organizational improvement and learner-centered development across the VET sector.

2. Comprehensive Explanations

"A chapter outlining all five Design Thinking steps, the objectives, requirements and features of each step"

2.1 The Five Steps of Design Thinking: A Detailed Framework

The Design Thinking framework emphasizes user-centered innovation and creative problem-solving. Its five key steps are: **Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype,** and **Test** (Brown, 2009). Whether you're redesigning educational practices, crafting user-friendly technologies, or addressing complex societal issues, Design Thinking transforms the way you approach challenges—unlocking the potential to create solutions that are not only effective but also meaningful and impactful. Dive into this transformative journey and discover how Design Thinking can elevate your work, your organization, and the lives of those you serve.

DESIGN THINKING
A FRAMEWORK FOR INNOVATION

EMPATHIZE
Innovation should be
human-centered.

IDEATE
Innovation is born
from a clash of ideas.

DEFINE
Innovation should
solve a problem.

TEST
Innovation should
be refined.

PROTOTYPE
Innovation should
be brought to life.

The main objective of the **Empathize phase** in the Design Thinking process is to deeply understand the needs, challenges, emotions, and perspectives of the users or stakeholders involved. This phase focuses on immersing oneself in the users' context to gather qualitative insights through observation, interviews, and participatory activities (IDEO, 2015). For vocational education and training (VET), this involves engaging with learners, educators, and industry stakeholders to identify their aspirations, pain points, and expectations.

The **ultimate aim** is to build a comprehensive understanding of the user's environment and motivations to inform the subsequent stages of the design process, ensuring that the solutions developed are user-centered and aligned with real-world needs (Dam & Siang, 2020). This step emphasizes active listening, empathy-building, and unbiased data collection to uncover both explicit and latent user requirements.

User Research Methods

User Needs & Emotions

Immersive Engagement

Uncovering Hidden Insights
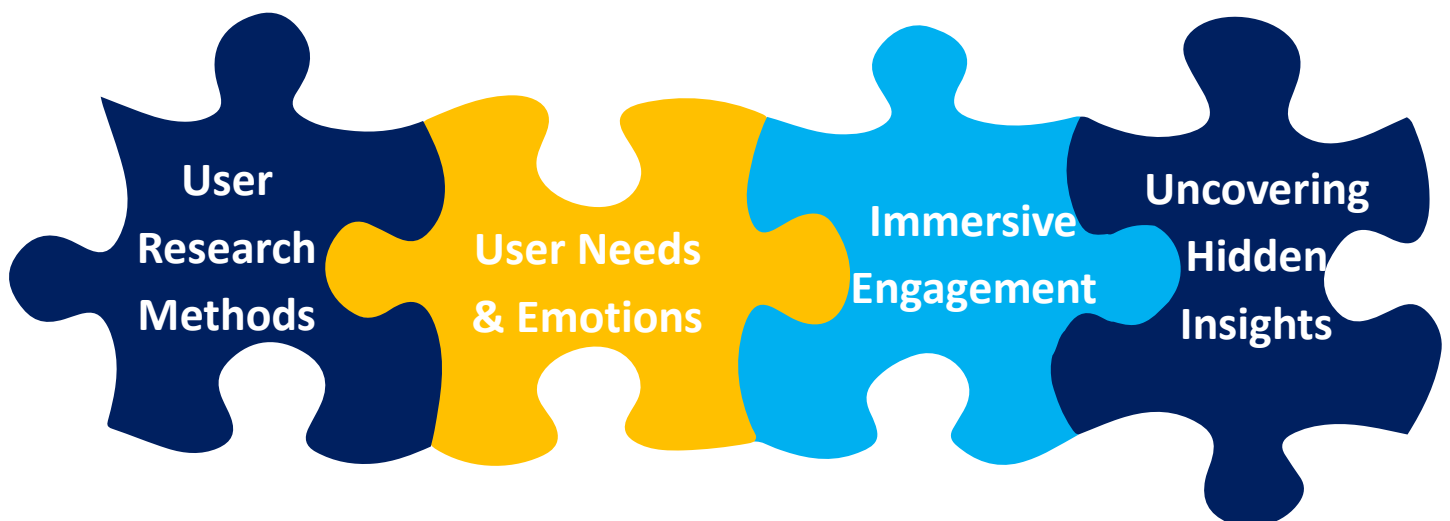
The main objective of the **Define phase** in the Design Thinking process is to synthesize and make sense of the information gathered during the Empathize phase to develop a clear and actionable problem statement (Liedtka, 2015). This stage aims to frame the problem in a way that is user-centered, inspiring, and focused on identifying opportunities for innovation (Plattner et al., 2011).

The **ultimate aim** is to encourage teams to uncover insights, highlight user needs, and articulate a distinct point of view that guides the ideation process (Brown, 2009). It seeks to ensure that the problem statement is specific, avoids assumptions, and reflects a deep understanding of the users' context and challenges, ultimately serving as a foundation for creative and effective solutions.

Synthesize Insights

Highlight Key Needs

Craft Problem Statement

Establish Point of View
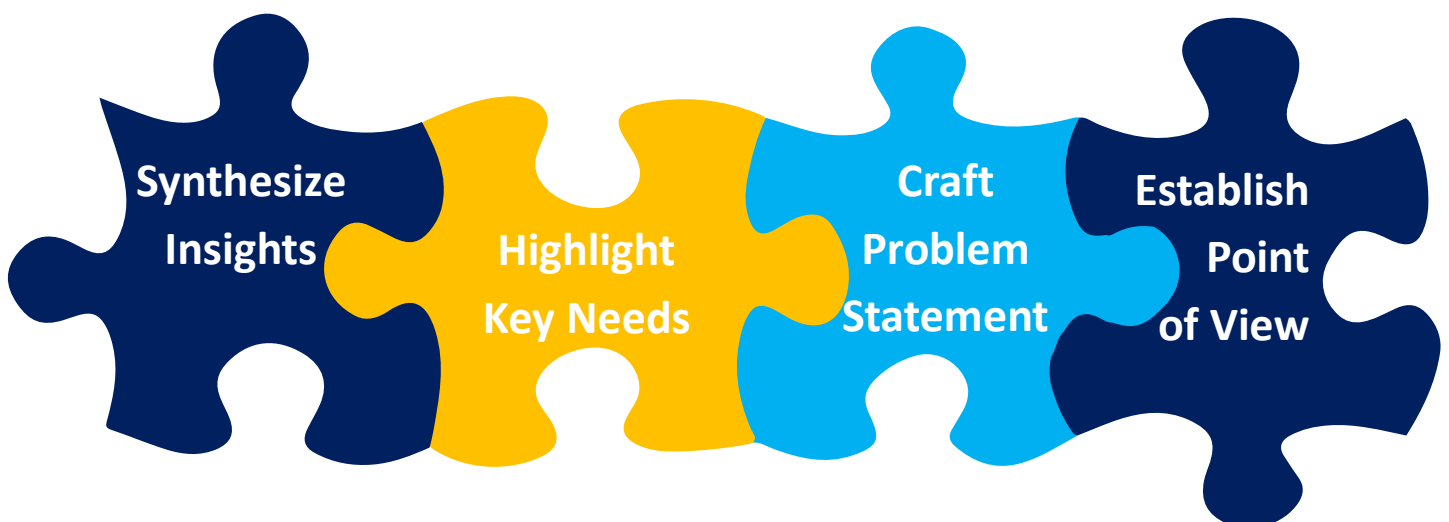
The main objective of the **Ideate phase** is to generate a broad range of innovative ideas that address the problem defined in the previous phase and to push beyond conventional thinking by exploring diverse possibilities (Brown, 2009). This phase emphasizes divergent thinking to encourage creativity and challenge assumptions, followed by convergence to refine and prioritize the most promising concepts (Liedtka, 2015). In the VET context, the Ideate phase aims to create solutions that are both practical and adaptable, ensuring they meet the needs of learners and industry stakeholders (IDEO.org, 2015).

The **ultimate aim** is to foster collaboration among team members, leveraging interdisciplinary perspectives to enhance the breadth and quality of ideas (Plattner et al., 2011).
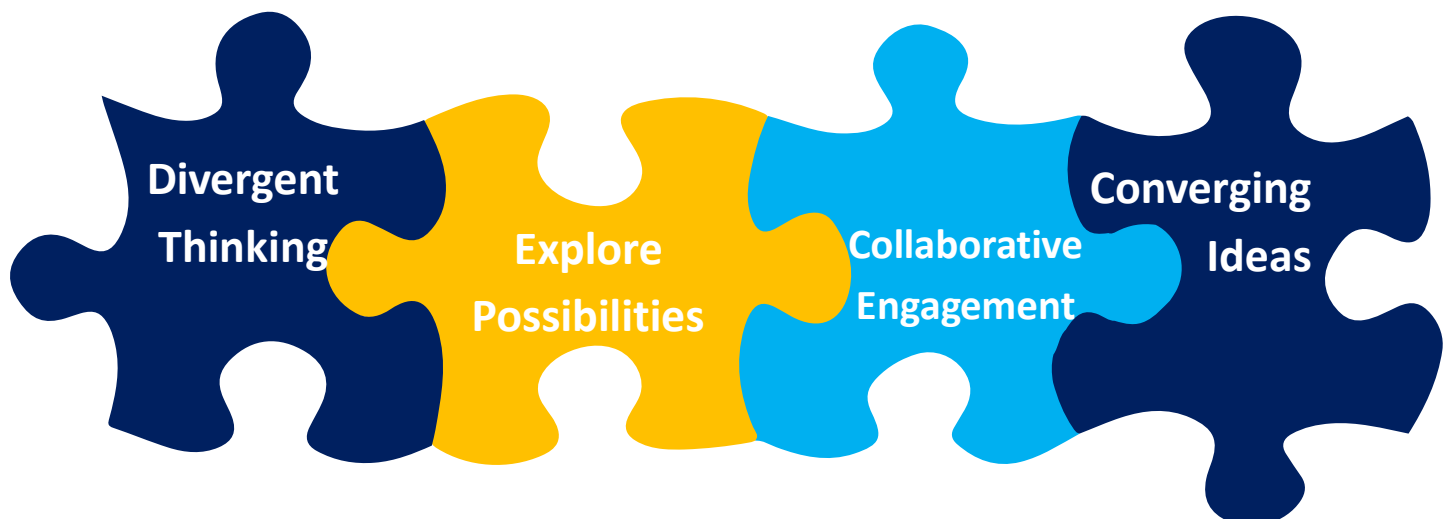
The main objective of the **Prototype phase** is to create tangible representations of ideas that can be tested and refined based on user feedback (Liedtka & Ogilvie, 2011). This phase focuses on translating abstract concepts into physical or digital forms that allow teams to explore the functionality and usability of their solutions (Plattner et al., 2011). Prototyping helps identify gaps, validate assumptions, and uncover unforeseen challenges early in the process (Kelley, 2001).

The **ultimate aim** is to iterate and improve the design through practical, hands-on exploration (IDEO.org, 2015). For vocational training contexts, it allows the design of realistic models or simulations that reflect real-world applications, enabling teams to test the effectiveness of their solutions in addressing learner and market needs.

Tangible Prototypes

Experiment Prototypes

Identify Gaps

Feasibility
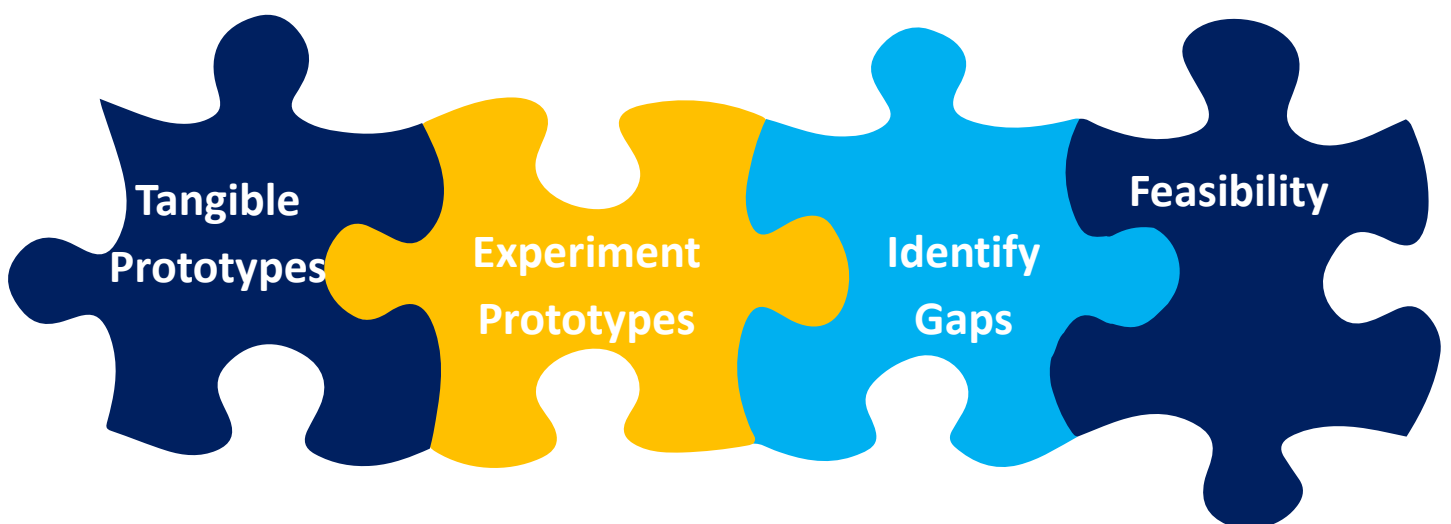
The main objective of the **Test phase** in the Design Thinking process is to evaluate the functionality, relevance, and effectiveness of prototypes by gathering user feedback in real-world or simulated environments (Brown, 2009). This phase aims to identify strengths, weaknesses, and potential areas for improvement in the proposed solutions, ensuring they meet user needs and align with defined goals (Plattner et al., 2011).

The **ultimate aim** is to validate assumptions made during earlier phases, helping to refine solutions through iterative feedback (Kelley, 2001). In the VET context, this step focuses on ensuring that training tools, methods, or curricula are practical, user-friendly, and capable of addressing both learner and labor market requirements effectively.

User Feedback

Strengths & Weaknesses

Iterative Refinement

Validating Assumptions
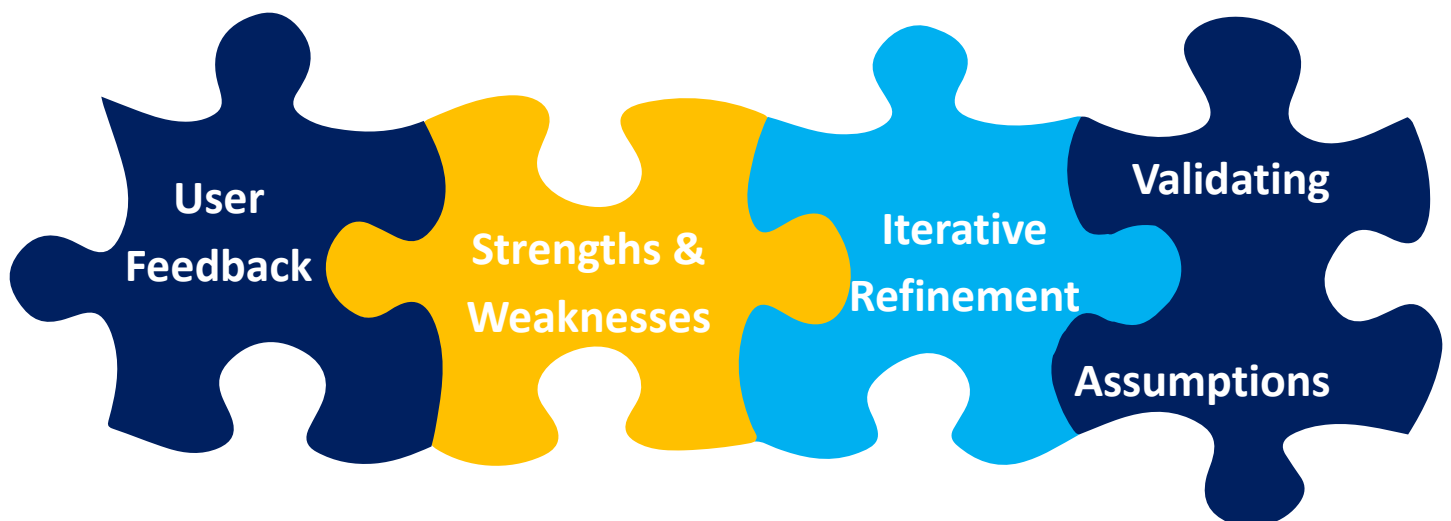
2.2 Key Expected Outcomes of each stage

EMPATHIZE PHASE

1. **User-Centered Insights:** The Empathize step provides a deep understanding of the needs, emotions, and challenges of the target audience, ensuring that solutions are designed with real user priorities in mind (Gasparini, 2015).

2. **Qualitative Research Outputs:** This phase generates empathy maps, personas, and journey maps, revealing both explicit and latent user needs that inform problem definition and ideation (Hashim et al., 2019; Jia et al., 2024).

3. **Foundation for Innovation:** By grounding the design process in real-world contexts, the Empathize step ensures that solutions are practical, innovative, and impactful, guiding the next stages of the Design Thinking process (Пригодій, 2024).

DEFINE PHASE

1. **Clear Problem Statement (POV):** The Define step results in a well-articulated problem statement that captures user needs and insights, providing a user-focused and actionable foundation for ideation (Jia et al., 2024).

2. **Prioritized Needs & Key Insights:** It synthesizes emotional and functional user needs, identifying core challenges and reframing opportunities to guide solution development (Lindberg et al., 2011; Krüger, 2019).

3. **Strategic Alignment & Direction:** The output includes "How Might We" (HMW) questions, ensuring team alignment and establishing a clear direction for the Ideate phase (Panke, 2019).

IDEATE PHASE

1. **Diverse and Innovative Solutions:** The Ideate step generates a wide range of creative ideas that challenge conventional thinking and address the defined problem statement in a user-centered way (Buphate & Esteban, 2022).

2. **Tangible Concept Development:** The process results in sketches, concepts, and potential approaches, some of which are refined and prioritized for prototyping (Lindberg et al., 2011; Panke, 2019).

3. **Adaptable and Practical Solutions for VET:** In the vocational education and training (VET) context, the outputs focus on developing flexible and effective solutions tailored to learners, educators, and industry needs (Jia et al., 2024).

PROTOTYPE PHASE

1. **Tangible and Testable Solution:** The Prototype step produces a functional representation of the solution, showcasing key features and user experience to address the defined problem (Liedtka & Ogilvie, 2011).

2. **Real-World Applicability:** Deliverables may include physical models, digital mock-ups, or simulated environments, particularly in vocational education, to reflect practical applications (Kelley, 2001).

3. **Iteration and Refinement Tool:** Prototypes enable user testing and feedback collection, allowing for continuous refinement and improvement before full-scale implementation (Plattner et al., 2011; IDEO.org, 2015).

TEST PHASE

1. **Validated and Refined Solution:** The Test step delivers a solution that has been improved based on stakeholder feedback, ensuring it effectively addresses the defined problem and user needs (Brown, 2009).

2. **Real-World Applicability in VET:** The final output may include enhanced training modules, revised teaching tools, or improved learning frameworks tailored for practical implementation in vocational education (Jia et al., 2024).

3. **Comprehensive Testing Documentation:** Reports detailing testing results, strengths, weaknesses, and iterations serve as key deliverables to inform future implementation, scaling, or further refinements (Plattner et al., 2011).

2.3 Common Challenges and Strategies

Challenges in the Empathize Phase:

- **Gaining Trust and Authentic Insights** – Users may hesitate to share genuine thoughts, especially in sensitive or unfamiliar settings.

- **Biases in Observation and Interpretation** – Designers might unconsciously interpret user feedback through their own perspectives, affecting objectivity.

- **Limited Access to Target Users or Contexts** – Reaching specific user groups or environments can be difficult, restricting data collection.

Strategies to Overcome Challenges:

- **Building Rapport and Creating a Safe Environment** – Establish trust by fostering a nonjudgmental space and using active listening techniques.

- **Using Structured Research Tools** – Employ empathy maps, user personas, and cross-disciplinary reviews to minimize biases in interpretation.

- **Leveraging Alternative Research Methods** – Utilize community networks and surveys to reach diverse and hard-to-access user groups.

Challenges in the Define Phase:

- **Framing the Problem Statement Too Broadly** – A vague or overly general problem statement can lead to unfocused ideation and solutions.

- **Relying on Assumptions Instead of Insights** – Making decisions based on assumptions rather than user research can result in misaligned objectives.

- **Focusing on Solutions Too Early** – Jumping to solutions before fully understanding the problem can limit creativity and lead to ineffective outcomes.

Strategies to Overcome Challenges:

- **Grounding the Problem in User Feedback and Data** – Use direct insights from the Empathize phase to ensure a user-centered problem statement.

- **Refining the Problem Statement Iteratively** – Utilize techniques like clustering insights

  refining "How Might We" questions, and peer reviews to maintain focus.

- **Challenging Preconceived Notions** – Regularly revisit and reframe the

  problem statement based on new perspectives to ensure clarity.

Challenges in the Ideate Phase:

- **Limited Creativity Due to Cognitive Biases** – Team members may rely on familiar ideas or conventional thinking, limiting innovation.
- **Dominance of Certain Voices in Discussions** – Louder or more assertive participants may overshadow quieter voices, reducing idea diversity.
- **Premature Evaluation of Ideas** – Early critique can stifle creativity and discourage risk-taking in idea generation.

Strategies to Overcome Challenges:

- **Using Structured Creativity Techniques** – Methods like SCAMPER help break habitual thinking and encourage alternative perspectives.
- **Facilitating Inclusive Ideation Sessions** – Approaches like brainwriting ensure equal participation by allowing anonymous idea submission.
- **Encouraging Divergent Thinking** – Using a "yes, and…" mindset fosters an open judgment-free environment for idea exploration.

Challenges in the Prototyping Phase:

- **Overcomplicating Prototypes** – Teams may focus too much on perfection rather than quickly testing core functionalities.

- **Resistance to Feedback** – Attachment to initial concepts can make teams reluctant to embrace user-driven changes.

- **Limited Resources (Time, Tools, Expertise)** – Constraints in materials, expertise, or budget can hinder prototype development.

Strategies to Overcome Challenges:

- **Emphasizing Rapid Prototyping** – Prioritize speed and simplicity to test core ideas quickly without overcomplicating designs.

- **Fostering a Culture of Iteration** – Encourage teams to view feedback as an opportunity for continuous improvement.

- **Leveraging Low-Cost and Digital Tools** – Use affordable materials and prototyping software to maximize resource efficiency.

Challenges in the Test Phase:

- **Insufficient User Feedback** – Poorly designed testing methods or lack of participant engagement can lead to incomplete insights.
- **Confirmation Bias** – Teams may focus on positive feedback and ignore critical flaws, limiting solution improvements.
- **Limited Time and Resources** – Constraints can restrict the depth of testing, leading to less thorough evaluations.

Strategies to Overcome Challenges:

- **Creating Realistic Testing Environments** – Engage diverse users in authentic scenarios to gather meaningful and comprehensive feedback.
- **Establishing Clear, Objective Evaluation Criteria** – Actively seek constructive criticism and avoid bias by using structured assessment methods.
- **Prioritizing Essential Aspects for Testing** – Use small-scale, iterative tests such as pilot programs to refine solutions efficiently within resource constraints.

3. Real Word Examples

"A chapter illustrating how Design Thinking and human-centered design are transforming project management and educational change processes through real-life examples"
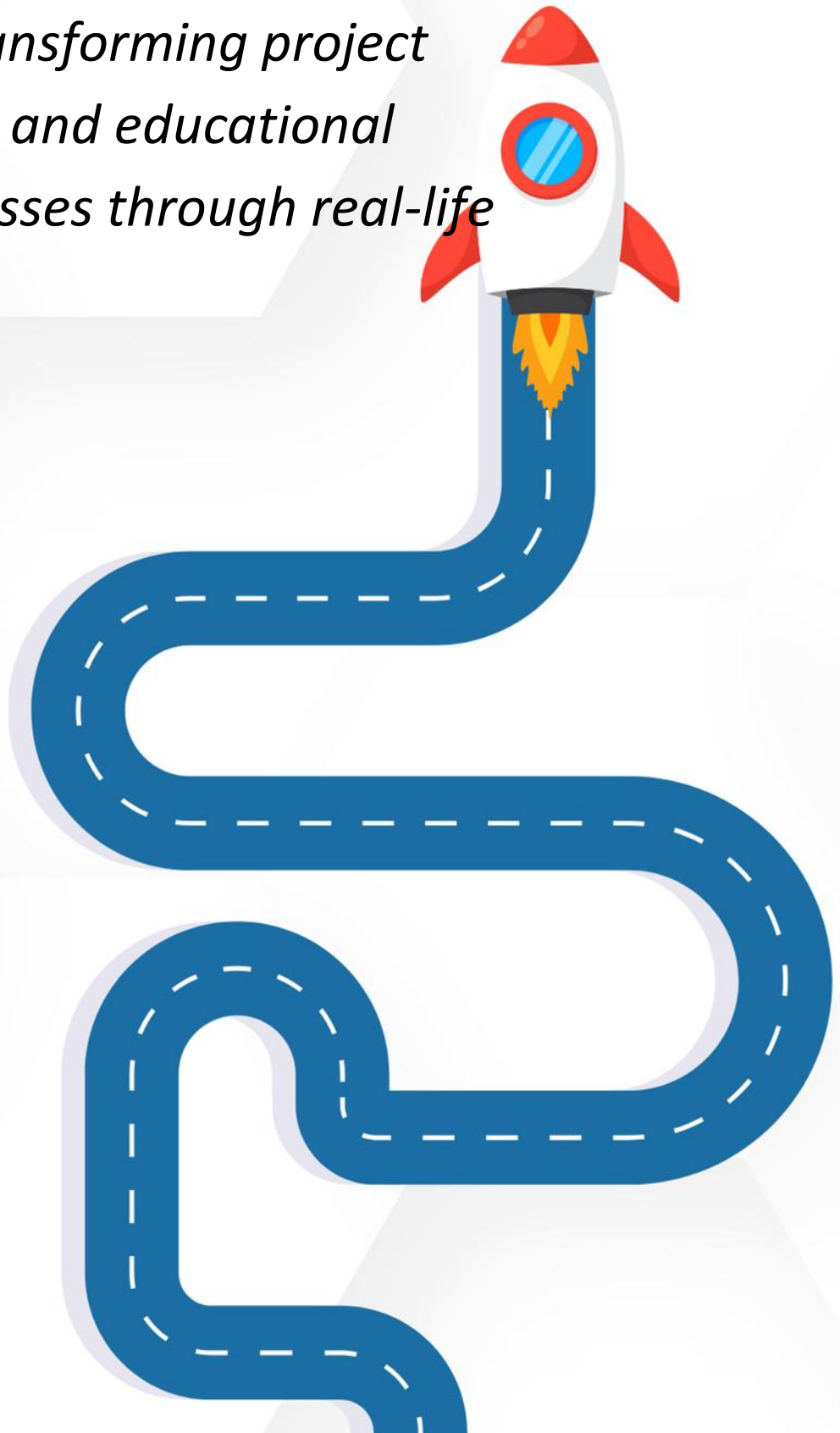
3.1 Case Study 1:
The role of design thinking in trying to solve educational problems

Sector: Education, specifically addressing public education challenges through the application of technological solutions and design thinking principles.

Background and Context: The Indonesian education system has long struggled with issues such as teacher absenteeism, ineffective use of government funding, and a mismatch between educational outputs and labor market demands. These challenges are compounded by Indonesia's geographical diversity, which limits equal access to quality education. To address these, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (MoECRT) collaborated with GovTech Edu, a government unit leveraging technology and design thinking.

Target Audience: The initiative targets a broad range of stakeholders within the educational ecosystem, including students, teachers, and policymakers. It aims to improve teaching quality, optimize education funding, and align education with industry needs.

Results Achieved: The introduction of design thinking in Indonesia's education policy led to the development of seven national programs impacting thousands of institutions and millions of users. These programs improved the accessibility and usability of educational tools and fostered innovation within a traditionally rigid system

Key Success Factors: Success was driven by strong leadership, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the scalability of tech-enabled solutions. The adoption of agile methodologies from the tech industry also played a crucial role.

Challenges and Adaptations: While design thinking proved effective, challenges included political resistance and the lack of integration with cultural and historical considerations. Additionally, rapid experimentation and iteration often clashed with traditional bureaucratic processes

For further reading: Center for Digital Society (CfDS). (2023). The role of design thinking. Retrieved from https://digitalsociety.id/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/83-CfDS-Case-Study-The-Role-of-Design-Thinking.pdf

3.2 Case Study 2:
The impact of Design Thinking in innovation: A case study at Scania IT

Sector: Automotive Industry, with a focus on IT services and system development.

Background and Context: Scania, a global leader in manufacturing heavy goods vehicles, is transitioning from a traditional manufacturer to a provider of sustainable transport solutions. The study examines Scania IT's innovation practices, exploring how Design Thinking methodologies are integrated with Agile frameworks to enhance innovation in IT services. The need arose to address the digital transformation of internal processes and develop user-centered, innovative solutions to maintain competitiveness

Target Audience: The primary participants impacted are Scania IT employees, including designers, IT professionals, engineers, and business staff involved in service development and innovation.

Results Achieved: The integration of Design Thinking and Agile fostered collaboration, creativity, and innovation. Teams delivered prototypes and actionable development plans, enhancing problem-solving and communication. Employees gained a better understanding of user-centered design and reported increased creativity in their approaches.

Key Success Factors: User-Centric Approach: Emphasis on understanding and addressing user needs. Multidisciplinary Collaboration: Involving diverse roles to enrich perspectives. Flexible Frameworks: Adapting the Design Sprint methodology to fit organizational needs.

Challenges and Adaptations: Limited Familiarity with Design Thinking: Some employees were initially unclear about its purpose and application. Time Constraints: Teams faced challenges in allocating sufficient time for iterative processes. Cultural Shifts: Encouraging an innovation-focused mindset required organizational support.

For further reading: Housin, M. (2021). The impact of Design Thinking in innovation: A case study at Scania IT (Master's thesis, KTH Royal Institute of Technology). Retrieved from https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1622350/FULLTEXT01.pdf

3.3 Case Study 3:
Achieving sustainable innovation for organizations through the practice of Design Thinking

Sector: Automotive Industry

Background and Context: The German automotive industry is facing significant challenges due to emerging technologies like electromobility, autonomous driving, and new competitors such as Tesla and Google Car. To navigate these shifts, the industry has begun adopting Design Thinking (DT) to drive sustainable innovation. However, DT has often been applied as a workshop tool rather than being integrated into strategic decision-making processes.

Target Audience: Employees and management within major German automotive companies, focusing on cross-departmental innovation teams

Results Achieved: Improved collaboration across departments during workshops, leading to more user-centered solutions for strategic challenges. Increased awareness of the potential for DT to drive innovation beyond product development to organizational strategy. Identification of gaps in implementing DT as a strategic tool, such as limited post-workshop application and a focus on results over process.

Key Success Factors: Strong facilitation of workshops, integration of diverse participants, and the use of tangible prototyping to foster engagement and creativity.

Challenges and Adaptations: Overemphasis on tools and templates in DT workshops limited their strategic impact. Resistance to mindset shifts, particularly among senior managers accustomed to traditional hierarchical structures. Difficulty in sustaining momentum from workshops due to structural barriers in daily workflows.

For further reading: Marzavan, D., & Augsten, A. (2017). Achieving sustainable innovation for organisations through the practice of Design Thinking: A case study in the German automotive industry.

3.4 Case Study 4:
Empathy, food systems and design thinking for fostering youth agency in sustainability

Sector: Food Sustainability and Education

Background and Context: The Barilla Center for Food and Nutrition (BCFN) developed a series of initiatives to address global food sustainability challenges and empower youth as change-makers. These initiatives focused on integrating empathy and Design Thinking (DT) into educational settings to promote sustainable practices and systems-thinking competencies among young people.

Target Audience: Young researchers, university students, and youth leaders from around the world, with participants primarily under the age of 30

Results Achieved: Produced a globally recognized Youth Manifesto addressing food sustainability challenges, presented to policymakers and institutions. Fostered partnerships between youth organizations and stakeholders to work collaboratively on the SDGs. Enhanced understanding of food sustainability complexity among over 600 students using the FSI educational toolkit.

Key Success Factors: Engagement with diverse youth and stakeholders from around the globe. Emphasis on empathy and systems thinking to connect individual actions with broader sustainability goals. Use of transdisciplinary and participatory approaches to address complex issues.

Challenges and Adaptations: Integrating food sustainability into diverse educational curricula faced institutional and bureaucratic hurdles. Scaling empathy and systems-thinking approaches required sustained partnerships and innovative pedagogical models.

For further reading: Allievi, F., Massari, S., Recanati, F., & Dentoni, D. (2021). Empathy, food systems and design thinkingfor fostering youth agency in sustainability: A new pedagogical model.

3.5 Case Study 5:
Thinking & Acting Like a Designer: How Design Thinking Supports Innovation in K-12 Education

Sector: Education (K-12)

Background and Context: The publication emphasizes the urgent need to adapt education to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world. It seeks to foster creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking among students and educators. The case studies within address how design thinking has been implemented in various K-12 educational settings to innovate schools, empower teachers, and enhance student learning outcomes.

Target Audience: The main users or participants impacted include Students (benefiting from enhanced learning environments and real-world problem-solving opportunities), Teachers and educators (as agents of change and collaborators), School administrators (to reimagine and implement systemic changes)
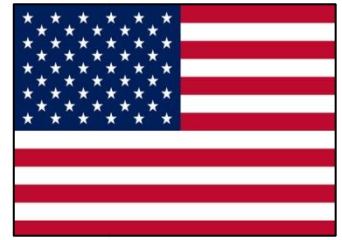
Results Achieved: Enhanced student engagement through personalized and project-based learning. Development of 21st-century skills like creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration. Positive cultural shifts within schools, fostering teacher collaboration and empowerment. Scalable school models, such as the example of Innova Schools, that deliver quality education at low cost.

Key Success Factors: Human-centered design: Prioritizing the needs of students, teachers, and communities. Collaborative processes: Engaging multiple stakeholders. Flexibility and scalability: Designing systems adaptable to different contexts. Innovative use of technology and resources: Leveraging existing tools to stretch limited resources.

Challenges and Adaptations: Resistance to change among educators and systems. Misunderstandings of design thinking as a quick-fix solution. Limited resources and need for professional training in design thinking. Balancing rigorous educational standards with creative processes.

For further reading: IDEO (2017). Thinking & Acting like a designer. How design thinking supports innovation in K-12 education. Retrieved from: https://dfcworld.org/file2015/case_study_1.pdf

4. Practical Approaches

"An inventory chapter of activities and approaches that VET professionals can leverage to drive innovation and inclusivity in their projects"
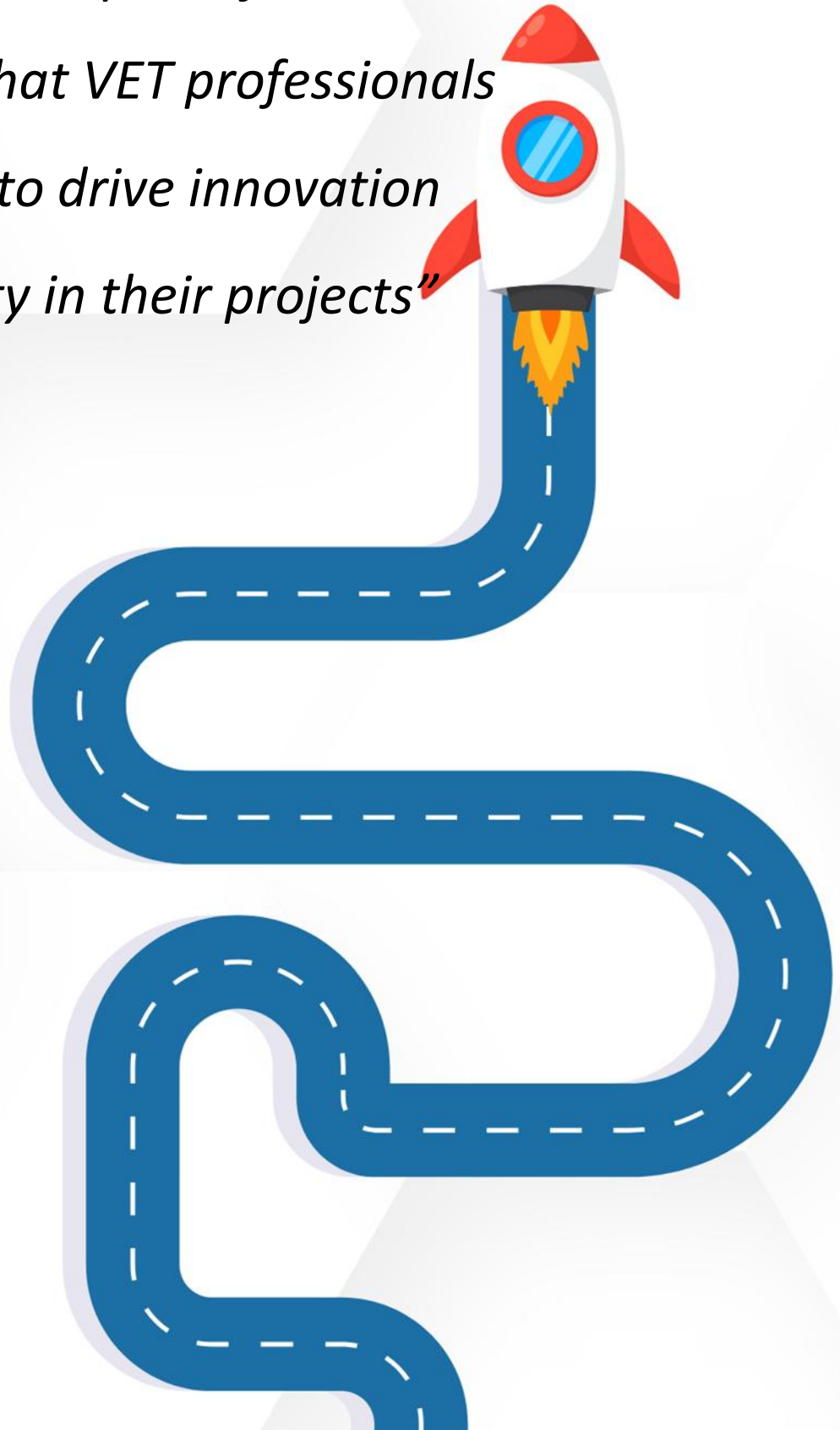
4.1 Empathize Phase:
Understanding User Needs

Approach 1: Stakeholder Interviews

Purpose: The objective of stakeholder interviews is to gather insights, perspectives, and experiences from key individuals affected by or invested in the design challenge. This approach fits into the Design Thinking process by deepening the understanding of user needs, motivations, and pain points. It lays the foundation for defining the problem accurately and creating user-centered solutions.

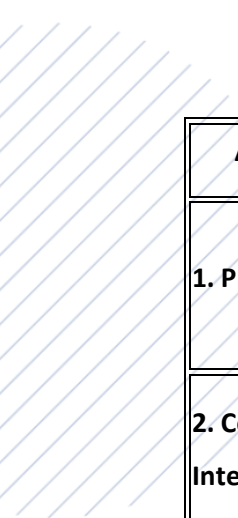| Activity	Description
1. Preparation	Identify stakeholders to be interviewed (e.g., users, clients, experts). Develop a set of open-ended questions to explore their needs, challenges, and goals. Schedule interviews and ensure clarity about the purpose and confidentiality.
2. Conducting Interviews	Begin with introductions and set a conversational tone. Ask open-ended questions, follow up for deeper insights, and actively listen. Record notes or audio (with consent) for accuracy.
3. Synthesis of Insights	Review interview data to identify common themes, outliers, and key takeaways. Use methods such as affinity mapping or empathy maps to visualize findings.
4. Feedback and Validation	Share synthesized insights with participants or team members to confirm accuracy. Adjust findings as needed based on feedback.

Materials and Tools Needed:
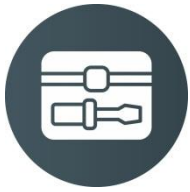
➢ **Physical Tools:** Whiteboards, sticky notes, markers, notebooks, or printed question sheets.

➢ **Digital Tools:** Audio recording devices, video conferencing platforms (e.g., Zoom, MS Teams), transcription software, digital note-taking apps (e.g., Evernote, Miro).

Impact on Learning and Engagement:

➢ **Enhances Creativity:** Uncovering diverse perspectives inspires innovative solutions.

➢ **Fosters Collaboration:** Builds a sense of inclusion and partnership among stakeholders.

➢ **Encourages Empathy:** Team members better understand the users' experiences and emotions.

➢ **Improves Problem Definition:** Offers nuanced insights that refine problem framing.

| Adapt interviews by using visual aids or gamified questions | Incorporate group interviews to reduce intimidation | Schedule asynchronous interviews via email or voice recordings | Use translated materials |
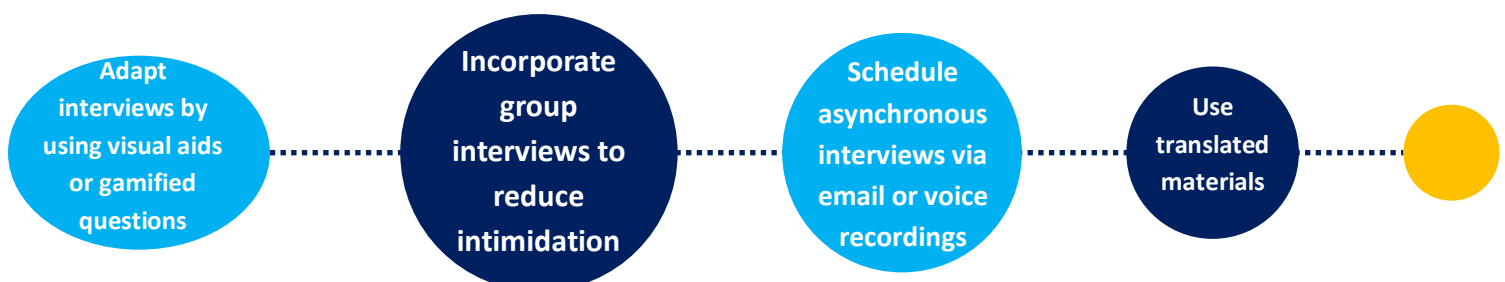
Empathize Phase:

Understanding User Needs

Approach 2: Empathy Mapping

Purpose: The objective of empathy mapping is to visualize and organize insights about the user's experiences, emotions, and behaviors. It helps teams better understand and empathize with users by capturing what they **say**, **think**, **feel**, and **do** in a structured format. This approach fits into the Design Thinking process by synthesizing user research, identifying unmet needs, and creating a shared understanding among team members.

Activity	Description
1. Preparation	Gather data from user interviews, surveys, or observations. Create a blank empathy map with quadrants for Say, Think, Feel, and Do.
2. Mapping	Divide participants into small teams or work as a single group. Populate each quadrant with user insights: - **Say:** Direct quotes or common expressions from users. - **Think:** Inferred thoughts or concerns not explicitly stated. - **Feel:** Emotions users experience, based on context or observations. - **Do:** Actions users take, including behaviors and habits. Use sticky notes or digital tools to add observations to the map.
3. Analysis and Synthesis	Identify patterns, contradictions, or gaps in understanding. Discuss the user's pain points, motivations, and goals based on the map. Highlight opportunities for

Activity	Description
	innovation or intervention.
4. Reflection and Sharing	Present the completed empathy map to stakeholders. Use the insights to inform personas, journey maps, or ideation sessions.

Materials and Tools Needed:

➢ **Physical Tools:** Whiteboards, large poster paper, markers, sticky notes.

➢ **Digital Tools:** Miro, MURAL, Lucidspark, or collaborative document tools like Google Jamboard.

Impact on Learning and Engagement:

➢ **Enhances Creativity:** Encourages participants to think deeply and holistically about user experiences.

➢ **Fosters Collaboration:** Provides a shared, visual tool for team alignment and discussion.

➢ **Builds Empathy:** Helps participants internalize user perspectives and emotions.

➢ **Informs Ideation:** Highlights clear areas for brainstorming solutions.

Use a collaborative approach

Capture cultural norms or values affecting user behavior

Allow team members to add insights over a set time period

Simplify language
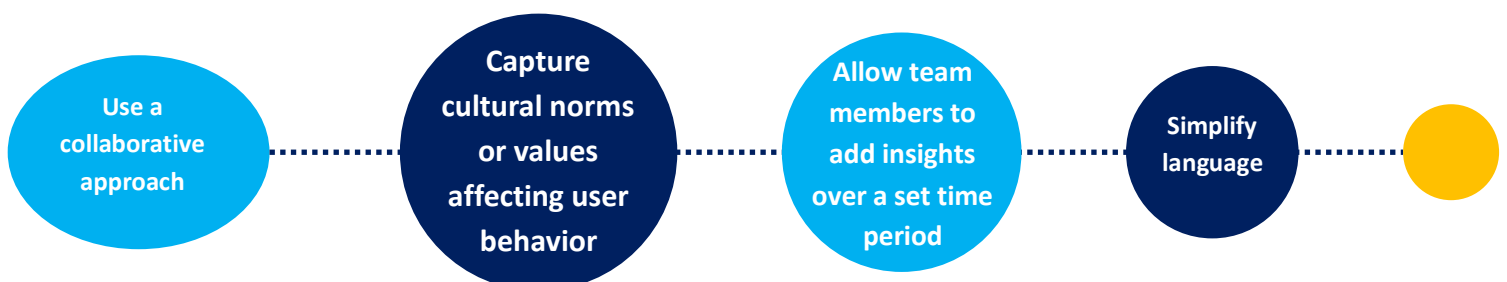
Approach 1: Problem Framing Workshops

Purpose: The objective of problem framing workshops is to align teams around a clear, actionable problem statement that reflects the users' needs and challenges. This approach is central to the Define phase in Design Thinking, as it ensures the problem is accurately scoped and sets the foundation for ideation and solution development.

Activity	Description
1. Preparation	Define workshop goals and invite cross-functional stakeholders. Gather insights from the Empathize phase (e.g., user interviews, empathy maps). Prepare templates for problem statements, worksheets, or guiding questions.
2. Introduction	Begin with a brief overview of the workshop purpose and outcomes. Review user insights and key findings from previous research. Set ground rules for collaboration and open-mindedness.
3. Challenge Identification	Facilitate brainstorming to capture perceived challenges or user pain points. Use techniques like the **"How Might We" (HMW)** framework to reframe challenges into opportunity areas. Group related challenges to identify common themes.
4. Problem Definition	Narrow down challenges using prioritization exercises (e.g., voting, impact-feasibility grids). Draft problem statements using formats like: - **"How might we [solve a challenge] for [specific user] to achieve [goal]?"**
5. Feedback and Refinement	Review drafted problem statements as a group. Refine based on clarity, focus, and alignment with user needs.

Materials and Tools Needed:

➤ **Physical Tools:** Whiteboards, flip charts, sticky notes, markers, printed templates for problem statements.

➤ **Digital Tools:** Miro, MURAL, Jamboard, collaborative documents (Google Docs, Notion), voting tools like Mentimeter or Poll Everywhere.
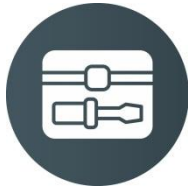
Impact on Learning and Engagement:

➤ **Enhances Creativity:** Encourages participants to think broadly about opportunities and challenges.

➤ **Fosters Collaboration:** Builds consensus and strengthens team alignment through collective problem identification.

➤ **Improves Clarity:** Ensures the problem is clearly defined and actionable, reducing ambiguity in subsequent phases.

➤ **Empowers Teams:** Involves diverse perspectives, leading to richer insights and a shared sense of ownership.

Use culturally adapted examples ··········· Use breakout rooms for small group discussions ··········· Tailor exercises for students by incorporating relatable scenarios ··········· Leverage voting features ···········

Approach 2: Root Cause Anaysis

Purpose: The objective of root cause analysis is to identify the underlying causes of a problem rather than addressing its symptoms. This approach is critical in the Define phase of Design Thinking as it ensures solutions target the real issues users face, leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes.

Activity	Description
1. Preparation	Gather insights from the Empathize phase (e.g., user interviews, observations, surveys). Select a specific problem or challenge to analyze. Introduce the methodology to participants (e.g., 5 Whys, Fishbone Diagram).
2. Problem Definition	Clearly articulate the problem to ensure shared understanding among participants. Use a concise, specific problem statement as a starting point.
3. Analysis Process	**5 Whys Technique:** - Ask "Why?" repeatedly (typically five times) for each problem statement to drill down into root causes. - Document responses in a structured format.
4. Validation	Review identified root causes with the group to ensure alignment and avoid assumptions. Validate findings with user data or additional research if needed.
5. Synthesis and Next Steps	Summarize the root causes and prioritize them for action. Use the output to inform ideation or solution design.

Materials and Tools Needed:

➢ **Physical Tools:** Whiteboards, flip charts, sticky notes, markers, templates for Fishbone Diagrams or the 5 Whys framework.

➢ **Digital Tools:** Miro, MURAL, Lucidchart (for Fishbone Diagrams), collaborative documents (Google Docs, Notion).

Impact on Learning and Engagement:

➢ **Enhances Critical Thinking:** Encourages participants to think deeply about the connections between causes and effects.

➢ **Fosters Collaboration:** Promotes dialogue and teamwork to uncover diverse perspectives.

➢ **Increases Problem-Solving Effectiveness:** Leads to a more thorough understanding of the problem, reducing the risk of addressing only symptoms.

➢ **Builds Confidence:** Empowers teams by providing a structured method to tackle complex challenges.

Gather all input and document them · · · · · Encourage critical thinking and problem-solving · · · · · Use visual and interactive tools to engage · · · · · Summarize · · · · ·
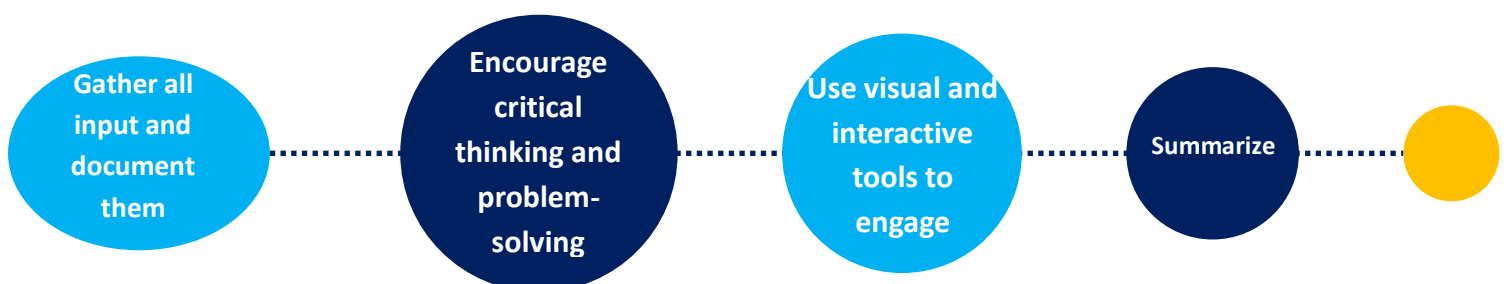
4.3 Ideate Phase:
Generating Creative Solutions

Approach 1: Brainstorming Sessions

Purpose: The objective of brainstorming sessions is to generate a large volume of creative ideas in a collaborative and judgment-free environment. This approach is integral to the Ideate phase in Design Thinking, enabling teams to explore diverse possibilities before refining and selecting the most viable solutions.

Activity	Description
1. Preparation	Define the focus question or challenge based on insights from the Define phase. Assemble a diverse group of participants with varied expertise and perspectives. Set ground rules: defer judgment, encourage wild ideas, build on others' ideas.
2. Warm-Up	Start with an icebreaker activity to stimulate creative thinking (e.g., a quick game or an unrelated brainstorming prompt).
3. Idea Generation	Present the challenge and ask participants to generate ideas individually or in small groups. Write down all ideas on sticky notes, a whiteboard, or a digital collaboration tool.
4. Idea Sharing	Have participants share their ideas, grouping similar ones and building upon them collaboratively.
5. Clustering and Prioritization	Group ideas into themes or categories. Use prioritization techniques like dot voting or impact-feasibility matrices to identify promising concepts.
6. Wrap-Up	Summarize the top ideas and document the session's outcomes for further development.

Materials and Tools Needed:

➢ **Physical Tools:** Whiteboards, sticky notes, markers, large sheets of paper.

➢ **Digital Tools:** Miro, MURAL, Google Jamboard, collaborative documents (e.g., Google Docs), and online voting tools (e.g., Mentimeter).

Impact on Learning and Engagement:

➢ **Enhances Creativity:** Encourages participants to think expansively and take risks in a safe, supportive setting.

➢ **Fosters Collaboration:** Leverages diverse perspectives to spark new ideas and foster teamwork.

➢ **Builds Momentum:** Generates enthusiasm and energy for problem-solving.

➢ **Encourages Inclusivity:** Provides a platform where all voices can contribute equally.

Encourage visual brainstorming with drawings

Use prompts that resonate with students' interests

Acknowledge and embrace cultural differences

Ensure inclusivity
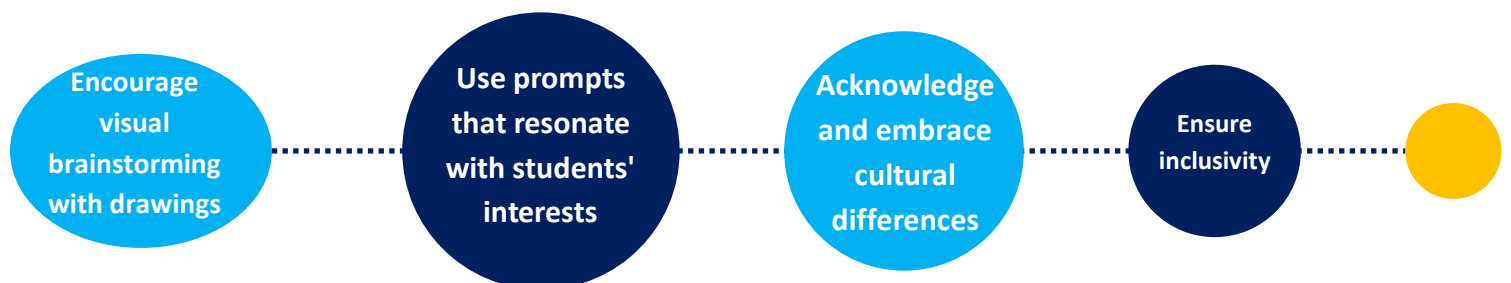
Approach 2: SCAMPER Technique

Purpose: The SCAMPER technique aims to systematically explore creative solutions by prompting participants to modify, adapt, or reimagine existing ideas or products using seven specific actions: Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify, Put to another use, Eliminate, and Rearrange. This approach is integral to the Ideate phase in Design Thinking, encouraging innovative thinking by reexamining existing concepts and unlocking new possibilities.

Materials and Tools Needed:

➢ **Physical Tools:** Whiteboards, flip charts, sticky notes, markers, printed SCAMPER worksheets.

➢ **Digital Tools:** Miro, MURAL, Google Jamboard, collaborative documents (e.g., Google Sheets or Notion).
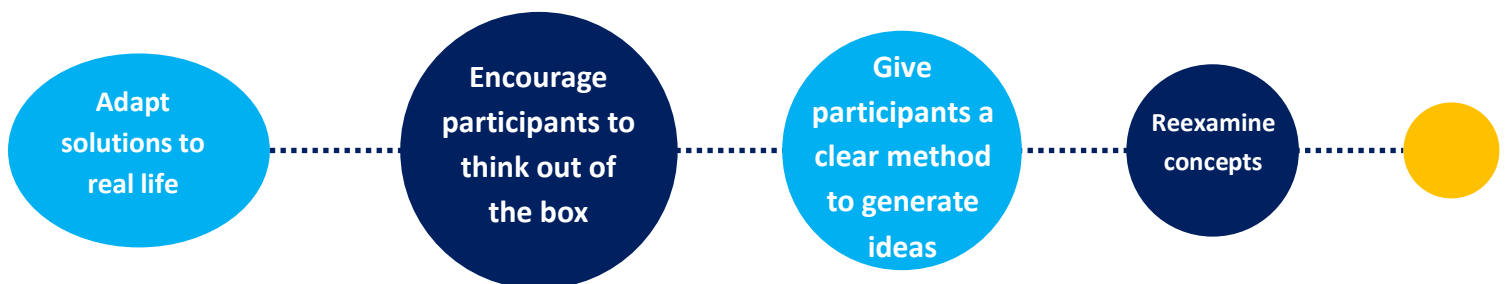
Impact on Learning and Engagement:

➢ **Enhances Creativity:** Encourages participants to think outside the box and question assumptions.

➢ **Fosters Collaboration:** Promotes idea sharing and collective problem-solving.

Activity	Description
1. Preparation	Prepare a SCAMPER worksheet or display the prompts for each action. Form small teams or facilitate as a single group.
2. Introduction	Explain the SCAMPER framework and provide an example for each action. Set ground rules for open-mindedness and encourage participants to think beyond limitations.
3. Applying SCAMPER	**Substitute:** Identify components or elements that can be replaced (e.g., materials, processes, people). **Combine:** Explore how elements or functions can be merged to create something new. **Adapt:** Consider how existing ideas can be adjusted for different contexts or needs. **Modify:** Brainstorm ways to alter features, scale, or performance. **Put to another use:** Think of new ways to repurpose a concept or object. **Eliminate:** Discuss what elements can be removed to simplify or improve functionality. **Rearrange:** Explore changes in layout, order, or structure for better efficiency or impact.
4. Documentation	Write down ideas for each SCAMPER action on sticky notes, whiteboards, or digital platforms. Encourage participants to elaborate on and build upon each other's ideas.
5. Evaluation	Review and discuss the generated ideas as a group. Identify the most promising concepts for further exploration and development.
6. Closure	Summarize the session's outcomes and next steps. Share the SCAMPER worksheet or output with participants for reference.

Adapt solutions to real life .... Encourage participants to think out of the box .... Give participants a clear method to generate ideas .... Reexamine concepts ....

4.4 Prototyping Phase:
Developing Tangible Solutions

Approach 1: Rapid Prototyping

Purpose: The objective of rapid prototyping is to quickly create a tangible representation of a solution, allowing teams to test ideas, gather feedback, and refine concepts iteratively. This approach fits into the Prototype phase of Design Thinking by bridging the gap between ideation and testing, ensuring solutions are user-centered and practical.

Activity	Description
1. Define Objectives	Identify the specific aspect of the solution to prototype (e.g., functionality, user interface, or layout). Set goals for what the prototype should demonstrate or validate.
2. Select a Prototyping Method	Decide on the type of prototype based on the stage of development and resources.
3. Build the Prototype	Assemble a small team to rapidly create the prototype using available materials or tools. Focus on simplicity and speed, prioritizing functionality over perfection. Encourage iteration—build, test, and revise in cycles.
4. Test and Gather Feedback	Present the prototype to stakeholders or users for testing. Observe interactions, collect feedback, and document insights. Use a feedback matrix (e.g., "What works?", "What doesn't?", "What's missing?") for structured evaluations.
5. Refine the Prototype	Incorporate feedback into the next iteration. Repeat the prototyping and testing cycle until the solution meets user needs and objectives.

Materials and Tools Needed:
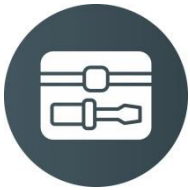
➢ **Physical Tools:** Cardboard, paper, markers, scissors, glue, clay, foam, rulers, 3D printers (for advanced prototypes).

➢ **Digital Tools:** Figma, Adobe XD, Sketch, InVision, Axure, Canva.

➢ **Collaborative Tools:** Whiteboards, sticky notes, Miro, Jamboard.

Impact on Learning and Engagement:

➢ **Enhances Creativity:** Encourages participants to think practically and tangibly about solutions.

➢ **Fosters Collaboration:** Brings teams together to brainstorm, build, and iterate in real time.

➢ **Improves User-Centered Design:** Provides immediate feedback on usability and feasibility.

➢ **Builds Momentum:** Creates visible progress, increasing engagement and team motivation.

Use simple materials .... Utilize feedback for improvements .... Repeat until solutions meet user needs .... Choose the Method ....
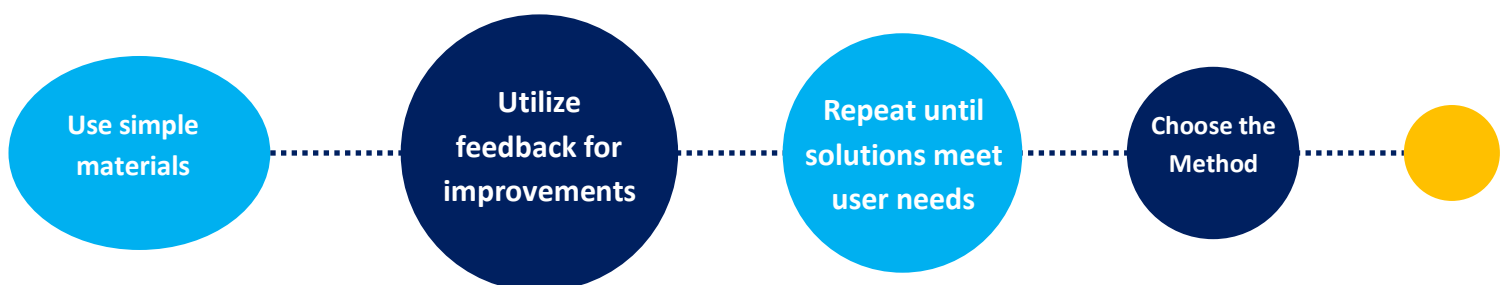
Prototyping Phase:

Developing Tangible Solutions

Approach 2: Storyboarding Technique

**Purpose:** The objective of storyboarding is to visually map out a user's experience with a solution in a step-by-step narrative format. This approach is part of the Prototype phase in Design Thinking, helping teams visualize how users interact with a product or service, identify potential issues, and refine the solution before building it.

Activity	Description
1. Define the Scenario	Identify the key user journey or problem to illustrate. Develop a clear understanding of the user's goals, context, and actions.
2. Outline the Steps	Break the scenario into discrete steps or stages, ensuring each action or decision point is clear. Focus on the user's interaction with the solution.
3. Create the Storyboard	Use simple sketches, stick figures, or icons to depict the sequence of events. Annotate each frame with short descriptions, highlighting user emotions, actions, and interactions.
4. Present and Gather Feedback	Share the storyboard with team members, stakeholders, or users. Encourage feedback on clarity, realism, and alignment with user needs. Adjust the storyboard based on insights or suggestions.
5. Refine and Iterate	Revise the storyboard to address feedback or incorporate additional details. Use the final storyboard as a blueprint for building physical or digital prototypes.

Materials and Tools Needed:
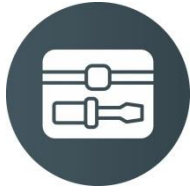
- ➢ **Physical Tools:** Whiteboards, large paper sheets, sticky notes, markers, colored pencils.

- ➢ **Digital Tools:** Canva, Miro, MURAL, Adobe XD, Figma, or PowerPoint for digital storyboarding.

- ➢ **Optional Resources:** Templates or storyboarding guides to structure the narrative.

Impact on Learning and Engagement:

- ➢ **Enhances Creativity:** Encourages participants to think visually and holistically about user experiences.

- ➢ **Fosters Collaboration:** Facilitates teamwork by providing a shared visualization tool.

- ➢ **Improves User-Centered Design:** Highlights potential user challenges or pain points early in the process.

- ➢ **Simplifies Communication:** Makes complex ideas accessible to a broad audience, fostering better alignment.

Use ready templates and visual elements

Utilize digital resources for greater impact

Ensure cultural inclusion and understanding

Personal or Group projects
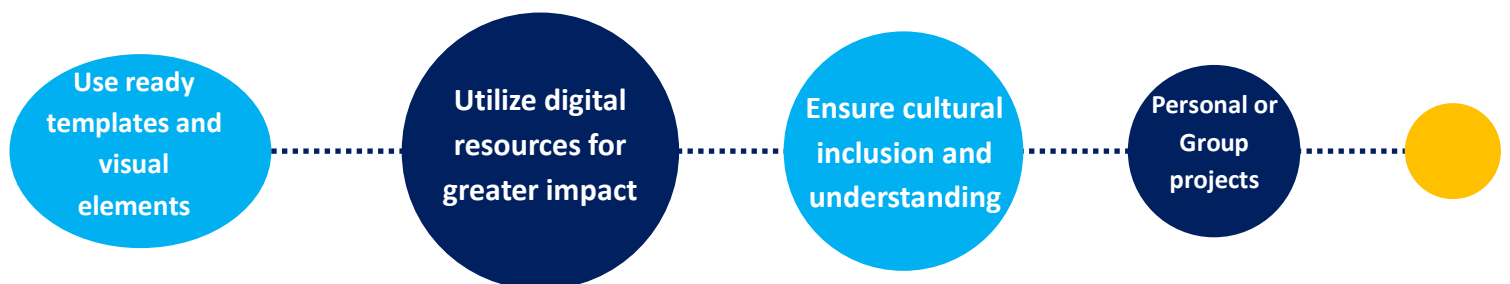
4.5 Test Phase:
Evaluating and Refining Solutions

Approach 1: Usability Testing

Purpose: The objective of usability testing is to evaluate how effectively users interact with a prototype or solution, identifying areas for improvement to enhance user satisfaction and functionality. This approach is essential in the Test phase of Design Thinking, as it ensures the solution aligns with user needs and expectations before final implementation.

| Activity	Description
1. Define Goals and Metrics	Identify the specific aspects of the solution to test (e.g., usability, accessibility, or user satisfaction). Establish success criteria and key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure outcomes.
2. Prepare Testing Materials	Develop scenarios or tasks that reflect realistic user interactions with the prototype. Create a checklist or rubric for observers to document user behavior and feedback.
3. Recruit Participants	Select a representative sample of target users to ensure feedback is relevant. Provide clear instructions and expectations for participants.
4. Conduct the Test	Facilitate one-on-one sessions where participants interact with the prototype while completing predefined tasks. Observe and record user behavior, noting challenges, errors, or points of confusion.
5. Gather Feedback	Use post-test interviews or surveys to collect qualitative and quantitative feedback. Record key insights and patterns from the sessions.
6. Analyze Results	Compile observations and feedback to identify usability issues and areas for improvement. Prioritize findings based on their impact on user experience.

Materials and Tools Needed:
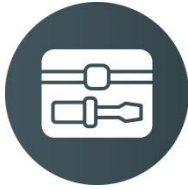
> **Physical Tools:** Prototype models, observation forms, note-taking tools, cameras (for recording sessions), and timers (for task durations).

> **Digital Tools:** Screen recording software (e.g., OBS Studio), usability testing platforms (e.g., UserTesting, Lookback), survey tools (e.g., Google Forms), and collaborative analysis tools (e.g., Miro).

Impact on Learning and Engagement:

> **Enhances User-Centered Design:** Ensures the solution meets user needs and preferences.

> **Builds Confidence:** Provides tangible evidence of what works and what needs refinement.

> **Encourages Collaboration:** Involves cross-functional teams in observing and interpreting user interactions.

> **Promotes Iteration:** Highlights actionable areas for improvement, reinforcing the iterative nature of Design Thinking.

Use localized scenarios · · · · · Test digital tools to identify barriers · · · · · Use peer review methodology · · · · · Discuss on evidence · · · · ·
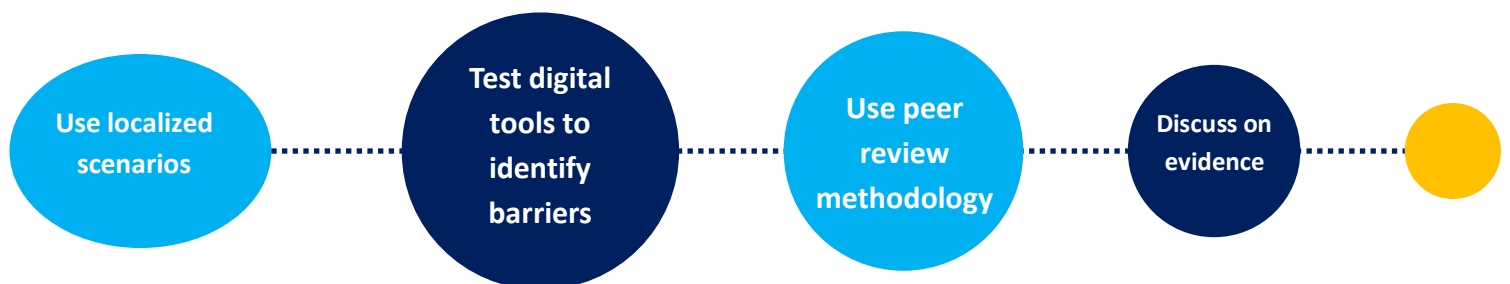
Approach 2: Pilot Programs

Purpose: The objective of pilot programs is to test a solution in a real-world setting on a small scale before broader implementation. This approach fits into the Test phase of Design Thinking by providing practical insights into how a solution performs under actual conditions, identifying unforeseen challenges, and refining the solution based on real feedback.

Materials and Tools Needed:
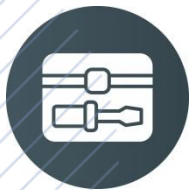
➢ **Physical Tools:** Printed user guides, feedback forms, observational checklists.

➢ **Digital Tools:** Analytics platforms, survey tools (e.g., Google Forms, Typeform), data tracking software, and communication tools (e.g., Slack, email).

Impact on Learning and Engagement:

➢ **Validates Practicality:** Tests how the solution functions in a realistic environment, uncovering potential barriers or limitations.

➢ **Fosters Collaboration:** Encourages active participation and feedback from stakeholders, end-users, and the design team.

| Activity	Description
1. Define Objectives	Clearly articulate the goals of the pilot program, focusing on specific aspects to evaluate (e.g., usability, effectiveness, scalability). Establish metrics to measure success and identify key performance indicators (KPIs).
2. Plan the Pilot	Choose a representative environment or user group for testing. Define the scope, duration, and resources needed for the program. Create a structured plan for monitoring and evaluating the pilot.
3. Prepare the Solution	Finalize the prototype or solution to a level suitable for real-world use. Develop user guides, training materials, or support resources to facilitate adoption.
4. Implement the Pilot	Roll out the solution to the selected group, providing necessary support and instructions. Observe interactions and gather real-time feedback through surveys, interviews, or direct observation.
5. Monitor and Collect Data	Track performance against predefined metrics. Document user experiences, challenges, and suggestions for improvement. Use tools like logs, feedback forms, or analytics dashboards to gather comprehensive data.
6. Analyze and Iterate	Synthesize findings to identify patterns, issues, and opportunities for refinement. Modify the solution based on insights and prepare it for broader implementation.
7. Communicate Results	Share outcomes with stakeholders and gather their input. Decide on the next steps, such as scaling, further testing, or making final adjustments.
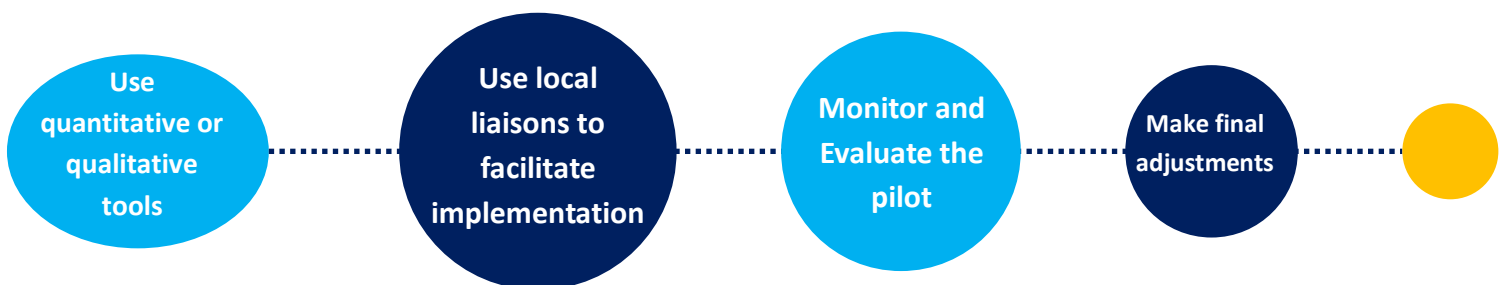
5. Digital Tools

"An inventory chapter of digital tools that can support the conduction of the Design Thinking process and its various steps through online collaborative instruments"
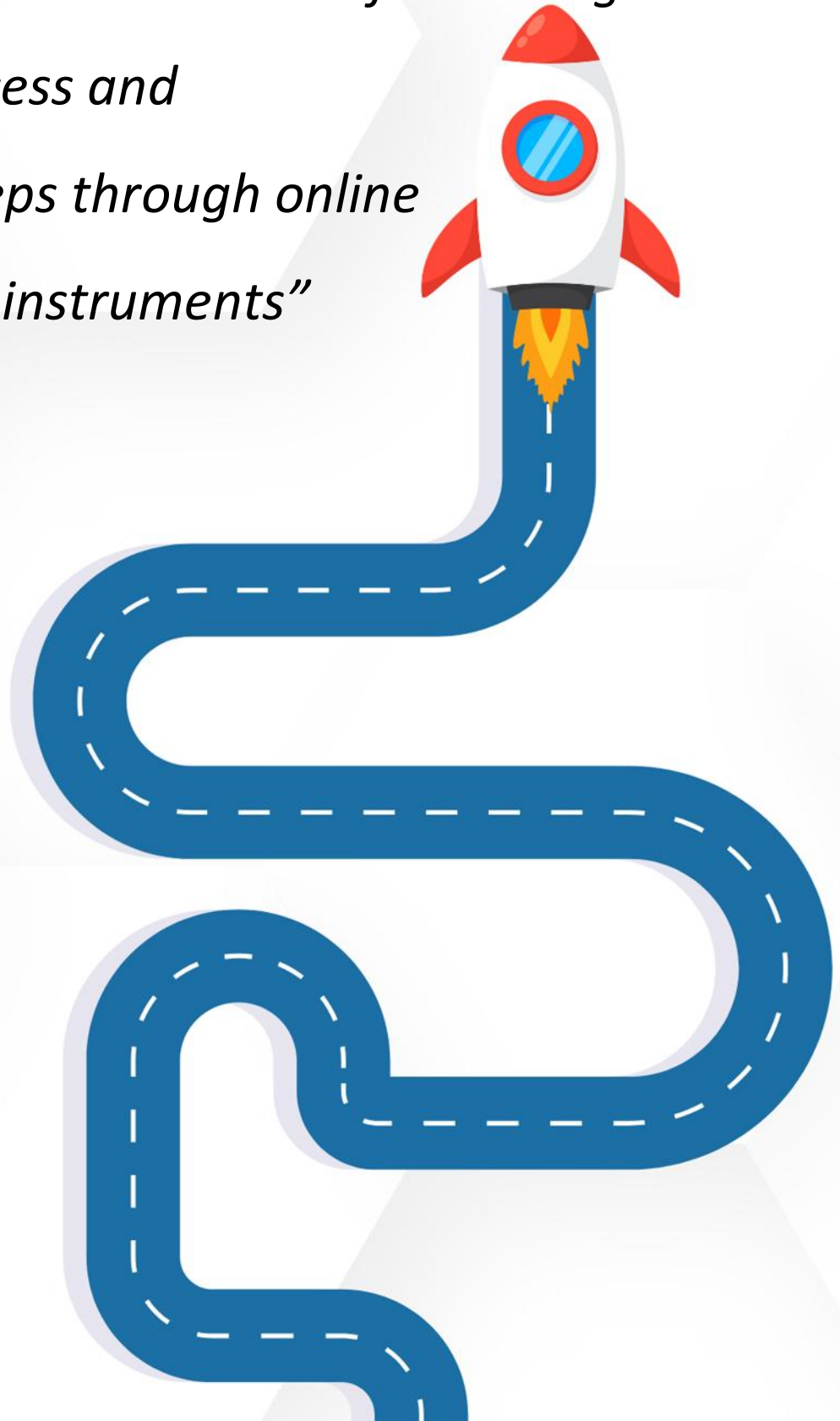
5.1 Digital Tools for the Empathize Phase

Tool Description

Miro is a collaborative online whiteboard platform designed for teams to brainstorm, organize, and collaborate visually in real-time. It is highly versatile and used across various industries, including design thinking processes.

Miro is widely used during the Empathize phase to **organize research findings, conduct brainstorming sessions, and develop user insights collaboratively**.

How to Use

1. Set Up a Board: Create a new board on Miro and name it according to your research focus (e.g., "User Empathy Research"). Choose a pre-designed template for empathy maps, journey maps, or brainstorming, or start with a blank board.

2. Gather Insights: Use sticky notes to document observations, user quotes, or key findings from interviews and surveys. Import media such as images or videos related to user contexts to enrich the research.

3. Organize and Analyze Data: Group sticky notes into categories or patterns using colors or tags to identify common themes. Create empathy maps to visualize user goals, needs, pain points, and emotions.

4. Collaborate with the Team: Invite team members to the board for real-time collaboration. Use the comment feature to discuss findings and refine insights collectively.

5. Summarize Key Insights: Synthesize findings into user personas or journey maps that capture the core understanding of your target users. Save and export the board for use in subsequent Design Thinking phases.

PROS

1. **Real-Time Collaboration:** Enables seamless teamwork across remote or distributed teams.
2. **User-Friendly Interface**: Easy to learn and use, even for non-technical team members.
3. **Ready-Made Templates:** Reduces setup time with pre-designed templates for empathy maps, journey maps, and personas.
4. **Visual Organization:** Facilitates clustering and pattern recognition through drag-and-drop functionality and color coding.

CONS

1. **Internet Dependency:** Requires a stable internet connection for optimal performance, which may limit usability in low-connectivity areas.
2. **Learning Curve for Advanced Features:** While basic functions are intuitive, some advanced capabilities may require additional time to master.
3. **Cost for Premium Features:** While Miro offers a free version, advanced features such as unlimited boards and integration options require a subscription.
4. **Overwhelming for Large Data Sets:** Managing extensive data on a single board can become visually cluttered and difficult to navigate.

Miro is accessible through its official website www.miro.com and is available as a mobile app on major app stores such as the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. It is also accessible as a desktop application for Windows and macOS.

Tool Description

Edutopia is an online platform dedicated to improving education by sharing evidence- and practitioner-based learning strategies. It is a resource hub for educators, researchers, and stakeholders in the education sector, offering insights into innovative teaching practices, classroom management, and student engagement.

Edutopia's focus on real-world experiences, human-centered strategies, and evidence-based approaches makes it an excellent resource for the Empathize phase of Design Thinking, **as it helps teams gain deep insights into the needs and contexts of students and educators**.

How to Use

1. Research Stakeholder Needs: Explore articles, videos, and case studies on Edutopia to understand the experiences, challenges, and needs of students, educators, and school administrators. Search for specific topics such as "student engagement", "inclusive education" or "social-emotional learning" to gather targeted insights.

2. Identify Key Trends and Themes: Use the platform's categorized content to identify patterns and common issues in education. This can inform empathy maps or user personas. Take notes on innovative strategies or recurring challenges faced by educators and learners.

3. Enrich Stakeholder Engagement: Leverage the knowledge gained to frame better interview questions or discussion topics when engaging directly with stakeholders in your Design Thinking project. Use real-world examples from Edutopia to validate or challenge assumptions about user needs.

4. Share Insights with the Team: Summarize key findings from Edutopia resources and share them with your team. Use these insights to build empathy maps, journey maps, or personas to better understand your users.

PROS

1. **Comprehensive Resource Library:** Offers a vast array of articles, videos, and case studies on various educational topics.
2. **Evidence-Based Content:** Provides research-backed strategies and real-world examples.
3. **Free Access:** All resources are freely available, making it accessible to a wide audience.
4. **Community Engagement:** Features contributions from educators worldwide, fostering a sense of community and shared learning.

CONS

1. **Information Overload:** The vast amount of content can be overwhelming for new users seeking specific information.
2. **Variable Depth:** Some articles may provide only a high-level overview, lacking in-depth analysis or practical implementation steps.
3. **Limited Interactivity:** While it offers valuable content, opportunities for interactive learning or direct engagement are minimal.
4. **Focus on U.S. Education System:** Predominantly features content relevant to the U.S., which may limit applicability in different educational contexts.

Edutopia is accessible through its official website at www.edutopia.org. The platform does not require downloads or app installations, as all resources are available directly online. It is entirely free to use, making it accessible to educators, researchers, and anyone interested in innovative education strategies.

5.2 Digital Tools for the Define Phase

Tool Description

Milanote is a visual collaboration and note-taking tool designed to help individuals and teams organize ideas and information creatively. For the Define phase of Design Thinking, Milanote is particularly effective in synthesizing research findings, clustering insights, and framing problem statements.

Milanote's focus on visual clarity, collaboration, and flexibility makes it an excellent tool for **synthesizing findings and defining clear, actionable problem statements** during the Define phase of Design Thinking.

How to Use

1. **Create a Board for the Define Phase:** Log in to Milanote and start a new board. Name it according to your project focus (e.g., "Define Phase: User Challenges"). Use sections or groups to structure your board, such as "User Insights," "Pain Points," and "Themes."

2. **Organize and Synthesize Insights:** Import data from the Empathize phase (e.g., user interviews, observations) into the board as sticky notes, text, or image cards. Cluster related insights visually using Milanote's drag-and-drop interface to identify patterns or recurring themes.

3. **Define the Problem Statement:** Use insights to craft clear, actionable problem statements. Add a dedicated section for drafting and iterating on statements like "How Might We" (HMW) questions.

4. **Collaborate and Refine:** Invite team members to the board to contribute feedback or suggest refinements to the identified themes and problem statements. Use Milanote's commenting feature to annotate specific points or sections for team discussion

PROS

1. **Intuitive Visual Interface:** User-friendly, drag-and-drop interface allows for easy organization of ideas and resources, making it accessible for users of all skill levels.
2. **Flexible Collaboration:** Supports real-time collaboration, enabling team members to work together seamlessly, regardless of location.
3. **Versatile Content Integration:** Allows incorporation of various content types, including text, images, links, and files, facilitating idea development.
4. **Customizable Templates:** Offers a range of templates for different creative processes, aiding in efficient project setup and consistency across projects.

CONS

1. **Limited Free Plan:** The free version of Milanote has restrictions on the number of notes and boards, which may be insufficient for larger projects or teams.
2. **Offline Access Limitations:** Milanote requires an internet connection for full functionality, potentially hindering productivity in offline environments.
3. **Advanced Feature Constraints:** Some advanced features are only available in the paid plans, which may limit functionality for free users.
4. **Learning Curve for Complex Projects:** While intuitive for basic use, managing highly complex projects may require additional time.

Milanote is accessible through its official website www.milanote.com and is available as a web-based platform. It also offers a mobile app for both iOS and Android devices, enabling users to access boards and notes on the go. The platform operates on a freemium model, offering a free plan with limitations and paid plans for advanced features.

Tool Description

Trello is a visual project management tool that uses boards, lists, and cards to organize and track tasks. For the Define phase of Design Thinking, Trello is particularly effective in organizing user insights, prioritizing challenges, and collaborating on problem definitions in a structured and visually engaging way.

Trello's flexibility and user-friendly interface make it a powerful tool for **synthesizing insights and collaboratively defining clear**, actionable problem statements during the Define phase of Design Thinking.

How to Use

1. Create a Trello Board: Set up a new Trello board and name it according to your project focus. Add lists to the board for key categories such as "User Insights," "Pain Points," "Themes," and "Problem Statements."

2. Organize Insights: Use cards to document specific user insights, observations, or challenges uncovered during the Empathize phase. Attach supporting documents, links, or images to cards for additional context.

3. Group and Categorize: Cluster related cards into lists or groups to identify patterns or themes in user challenges. Use labels to color-code categories such as "Critical Challenges," "Opportunities," or "Future Considerations".

4. Refine and Prioritize: Collaborate with team members to refine insights and prioritize key challenges that will shape the problem statement. Add checklists or due dates.

5. Define the Problem Statement: Create a dedicated list for potential problem statements or "How Might We" questions, based on the clustered insights. Allow team members to vote, comment, or provide feedback on cards to collaboratively finalize the problem definition

PROS

1. **User-Friendly Interface:** Trello's intuitive design makes it accessible for users with varying technical expertise, allowing for quick adoption and ease of use.
2. **Visual Task Management:** The Kanban-style boards provide a clear visual representation of tasks and progress, enhancing project transparency.
3. **Flexibility and Customization:** Boards, lists, and cards can be tailored to fit various workflows, accommodating diverse project management needs.
4. **Real-Time Collaboration:** Team members can collaborate simultaneously, with instant updates ensuring everyone stays informed.

CONS

1. **Limited Advanced Features:** Trello lacks some advanced project management functionalities, which may be essential for complex projects.
2. **Potential for Information Overload:** With extensive details on cards, users may experience information overload, making it challenging to identify high-priority tasks.
3. **Limited Offline Access:** As a primarily web-based tool, Trello's offline functionality is restricted, which can be problematic in areas with unreliable internet connectivity.
4. **Scalability Concerns:** While suitable for small to medium-sized projects, Trello may struggle to manage larger, more complex project structures effectively.

Trello is accessible via its official website www.trello.com and offers desktop apps for Windows and macOS. It also has mobile apps available on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store, enabling users to manage boards on the go. Trello operates on a freemium model, with both free and paid plans available.

5.3 Digital Tools for the Ideate Phase

Tool Description

MindMeister is a cloud-based mind mapping tool designed to help individuals and teams brainstorm, organize, and visualize ideas in a structured and collaborative way. It is widely used for creative thinking, planning, and idea management across various fields, including education, business, and design.

MindMeister's ability to **visualize, structure, and collaboratively build on ideas makes it a powerful tool for brainstorming and organizing concepts**, particularly during the Ideate phase of the Design Thinking process.

How to Use

1. Create a New Mind Map: Log in to MindMeister and start a new mind map. Name the central node (e.g., "Problem Statement") based on insights gained from the Define phase.

2. Brainstorm Ideas: Add branches from the central node to represent key ideas or potential solutions. Encourage free-form thinking by rapidly adding nodes without judgment. Use sub-branches to elaborate on main ideas or explore related concepts.

3. Organize and Prioritize: Group related ideas using drag-and-drop functionality to form clusters. Color-code branches or use icons to highlight priorities, feasibility, or categories. Refine ideas by collapsing or expanding branches to maintain clarity as the map grows.

4. Collaborate in Real-Time: Invite team members to the mind map. Allow them to add their ideas or comment on existing nodes, fostering a collaborative ideation process. Use brainstorming mode to manage input during live sessions effectively.

5. Review and Export: Review the completed mind map to identify key themes or actionable ideas.

PROS

1. **Real-Time Collaboration:** Facilitates simultaneous contributions from multiple users, enhancing team productivity.
2. **User-Friendly Interface:** Intuitive design makes it accessible for users with varying levels of technical expertise.
3. **Cross-Platform Accessibility:** Being cloud-based, it is accessible from any device with internet connectivity, supporting flexibility in work environments.
4. **Integration Capabilities:** Seamlessly integrates with tools like Google Drive, Microsoft Teams, and Trello, enhancing workflow efficiency.

CONS

1. **Limited Offline Functionality:** Requires an internet connection for full functionality, which may be a limitation in areas with poor connectivity.
2. **Performance with Large Maps:** Users have reported that very large or complex mind maps can lead to slower performance or responsiveness issues.
3. **Subscription Costs:** Advanced features and increased storage require a paid subscription, which may be a consideration for budget-conscious users.
4. **Mobile App Limitations:** Some users find the mobile app less intuitive or harder to use compared to the desktop version, potentially hindering productivity on mobile.

MindMeister is accessible via its official website www.mindmeister.com and as a mobile app available for download on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. The tool is cloud-based, meaning users can access it from any device with internet connectivity.

Tool Description

Mural is a collaborative online platform designed to facilitate visual thinking, brainstorming, and collaboration. It provides an infinite digital canvas where teams can organize ideas, create diagrams, and work together in real-time. The tool is especially suited for remote and distributed teams, offering a range of templates and integrations to enhance creative processes.

Mural's user-friendly interface and robust collaborative features make it a powerful tool for the Ideate phase of Design Thinking, where **brainstorming, organizing, and refining ideas are key to generating creative solutions.**

How to Use

1. Create a New Mural: Log in to Mural and start a new canvas. Use a brainstorming template to structure the ideation process. Name the canvas based on the focus of the brainstorming session (e.g., "Solutions for User Engagement").

2. Brainstorm Ideas: Add sticky notes to capture ideas, allowing team members to contribute simultaneously in real time. Encourage free-form thinking by rapidly adding ideas without immediate judgment or filtering.

3. Organize and Cluster Ideas: Group related sticky notes into clusters or themes using drag-and-drop functionality. Use color-coding to differentiate categories or priorities.   Use connectors or visual links to map relationships between ideas.

4. Collaborate and Refine: Invite team members to provide feedback using Mural's commenting and annotation tools.   Refine the ideas by ranking, voting, or prioritizing using built-in tools like the voting feature**.**

5. Document and Share: Finalize the ideation session by summarizing key ideas or actionable solutions. Export the canvas as a PDF or image for use in subsequent phases.

PROS

1. **User-Friendly Interface:** Mural's intuitive design makes it accessible for users with varying levels of technical expertise.
2. **Real-Time Collaboration:** Facilitates simultaneous contributions from multiple users, enhancing team productivity, especially for remote teams.
3. **Extensive Template Library:** Offers a variety of templates to suit different brainstorming and planning needs, saving time during setup.
4. **Integration Capabilities:** Seamlessly integrates with tools like Microsoft Teams, Slack, and Google Workspace, enhancing workflow efficiency.

CONS

1. **Learning Curve for Advanced Features:** While basic functionalities are straightforward, mastering advanced features may require additional time.
2. **Performance with Large Murals:** Users have reported that very large or complex murals can lead to slower performance or responsiveness issues.
3. **Subscription Costs:** Advanced features and increased storage require a paid subscription, which may be a consideration for budget-conscious users.
4. **Limited Offline Functionality:** Requires an internet connection for full functionality, which may be a limitation in areas with poor connectivity.

Mural is accessible via its official website www.mural.co and offers desktop and mobile apps available for download on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. As a cloud-based platform, it can be accessed from any device with an internet connection. Mural provides a free trial for new users and operates on a subscription model for extended features.

5.4 Digital Tools for the Prototype Phase

Tool Description

Figma is a cloud-based design and prototyping tool that facilitates collaborative interface design and development. It is widely used for creating user interfaces (UI), wireframes, and high-fidelity prototypes for web and mobile applications. Being browser-based, it allows real-time collaboration, making it ideal for teams working remotely or across different locations.

How to Use

1. Create a New Project: Begin by starting a new project in Figma. Create frames (artboards) to represent the screens or sections of your prototype. Use the drag-and-drop editor to add design elements like shapes, text, and images.

2. Design the Prototype: Use Figma's design tools to craft user interfaces (UIs), ensuring they align with the insights gained in earlier phases. Add placeholders or real content to represent functionality (e.g., buttons, menus, and forms).

3. Add Interactivity: Use Figma's prototyping feature to connect frames and create interactive elements, such as clickable buttons or navigable screens. Set transitions (e.g., slide, dissolve) and animations to simulate real-world interactions.

4. Collaborate with Team Members: Share the project with team members for feedback. Figma allows real-time collaboration and commenting, enabling iterative design improvements.

5. Test the Prototype: Share the prototype via a link with users or stakeholders. Use Figma's presentation mode to simulate the user experience without requiring additional software.

PROS

1. **Real-Time Collaboration:** Allows teams to work together simultaneously, making it ideal for distributed teams.
2. **Interactive Prototypes:** Supports animations and interactions, enabling realistic user flow simulations.
3. **Ease of Sharing:** Browser-based sharing eliminates the need for special software, ensuring easy access for stakeholders.
4. **Version Control:** Automatically tracks changes, allowing teams to experiment without losing earlier designs.

CONS

1. **Limited Offline Functionality:** Requires an internet connection to access and edit projects.
2. **Performance on Large Files:** Complex projects with numerous assets may lead to slower performance.
3. **Learning Curve:** While basic features are intuitive, mastering advanced capabilities like component libraries may take time.
4. **Subscription Costs:** Advanced features, such as unlimited file storage and enhanced collaboration tools, are only available in paid plans.

Figma is accessible via its official website www.figma.com and is available as a desktop app for Windows and macOS. It also offers a mobile app version on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store, allowing users to view and comment on designs while on the go. Figma operates on a freemium model, providing a free version for basic usage and paid plans for advanced features.

Tool Description

Adobe XD is a powerful vector-based design and prototyping tool developed by Adobe. It is widely used for creating interactive prototypes, wireframes, and user interfaces for web and mobile applications. For the Prototype phase of Design Thinking, Adobe XD excels in enabling designers to visualize and test solutions through interactive mockups.

Adobe XD's ability to **create interactive, high-fidelity prototypes, coupled with its collaboration and feedback tools**, makes it a valuable asset for the Prototype phase of Design Thinking.

How to Use

1. Design the Interface: Open Adobe XD and create artboards to represent different screens of your application or product. Use design tools to add elements like buttons, images, and text boxes, ensuring alignment with user needs identified in earlier phases.

2. Link Screens for Interactivity: Switch to the "Prototype" mode in Adobe XD. Use the drag-and-drop feature to link buttons, menus, and other elements to corresponding screens. Add transitions and animations to simulate realistic user interactions.

3. Preview the Prototype: Test the prototype in real-time by clicking the "Preview" button to experience the user flow and identify usability issues.

4. Collaborate and Gather Feedback: Share the prototype via a cloud link or directly with stakeholders and team members. Allow collaborators to comment directly on the prototype, fostering iterative improvements.

5. Refine and Iterate: Based on feedback, refine the design, update interactions, and test again to ensure the prototype aligns with user expectations and objectives.

PROS

1. **User-Friendly Interface:** Adobe XD offers an intuitive and easy-to-use interface, allowing designers to quickly create and prototype designs.
2. **Integration with Adobe Creative Suite:** Seamless integration with other Adobe products like Photoshop and Illustrator enhances workflow efficiency.
3. **Interactive Prototyping:** Supports the creation of interactive prototypes with animations and transitions, enabling realistic user experience simulations.
4. **Collaboration Features:** Allows for sharing prototypes with team members and stakeholders, facilitating feedback and collaborative design processes.

CONS

1. **Limited Advanced Features:** Some users have noted that Adobe XD lacks certain advanced functionalities compared to other design tools.
2. **Occasional Stability Issues:** Instances of the application closing unexpectedly have been reported, which can disrupt workflow.
3. **Learning Curve for Complex Features:** While the basic interface is user-friendly, mastering advanced features may require additional learning time.
4. **Limited Offline Access:** As a cloud-based tool, some features may require an internet connection, potentially hindering productivity in offline environments.

Adobe XD is available via its official website www.adobe.com and as a desktop application for Windows and macOS. It also offers a mobile app, Adobe XD Viewer, on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store for viewing and testing prototypes on mobile devices. Adobe XD operates on a subscription-based model with a free version available for basic use.

5.5 Digital Tools for the Test Phase

Tool Description

Monday.com is a cloud-based work operating system designed to streamline project management, task organization, and team collaboration. It offers customizable workflows and visual tools to help teams plan, execute, and monitor projects efficiently.

Monday.com's ability to **organize tasks, collect feedback, and coordinate testing activities** makes it an effective tool for the Test phase of Design Thinking, ensuring efficient management of iterative cycles and stakeholder involvement.

How to Use

1. Create a Testing Board: Start a new board on Monday.com to organize and track testing activities. Use customizable columns to define tasks such as "Prototype Testing," "User Feedback Collection," and "Iteration Improvements."

2. Assign Responsibilities: Assign team members to specific tasks or testing activities. Use deadline columns to ensure timely execution.

3. Track Feedback and Results: Log user feedback during testing sessions in designated columns. Use custom fields to categorize insights as "positive," "negative," or "suggestions for improvement."

4. Visualize Progress: Utilize Monday.com's timeline or Kanban views to monitor the progress of testing and iterations. Set up automation to notify team members of updates or changes.

5. Organize Iterative Cycles: Use Monday.com to create workflows for tracking prototype refinements based on feedback. Add automation to update statuses or move tasks across columns automatically.

PROS

1. **User-Friendly Interface:** Monday.com offers an intuitive and visually appealing interface, making it accessible for users with varying levels of technical expertise.

2. **Customizable Workflows:** The platform allows for extensive customization, enabling teams to tailor boards and workflows to specific project needs.

3. **Integration Capabilities:** Seamlessly integrates with a wide range of third-party tools and apps, such as Google Workspace, Microsoft Office, Slack, and more.

4. **Automation Features:** Offers automation features, such as triggers and automations, that can help eliminate repetitive tasks and save time.

CONS

1. **Cost Considerations:** Monday.com can be relatively expensive, which might not be suitable for smaller teams or startups with limited budgets.

2. **Learning Curve for Advanced Features:** Users may need some time to fully leverage advanced features and customization options effectively.

3. **Complexity for Large Projects:** Some users find that Monday.com's simplicity becomes a limitation when managing complex and large-scale projects

4. **Privacy and Security Concerns:** Concerns about data privacy and security, especially when using a cloud-based software to manage sensitive information

Monday.com is accessible via its official website www.monday.com and offers desktop and mobile apps available for download on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. It operates on a subscription-based model with a free trial available for new users to explore its features.

Tool Description

Typeform is a versatile online platform for creating engaging and interactive surveys, quizzes, and feedback forms. It is widely used to collect user insights in a visually appealing and user-friendly way, making it an excellent tool for the Test phase of Design Thinking.

Typeform helps streamline feedback collection during the Test phase, ensuring user insightsare captured effectively to inform iterative improvements to prototypes and solutions.

How to Use

1. Create a Feedback Form: Log in to Typeform and create a new form or survey. Use pre-built templates or start from scratch to design questions specific to your prototype or testing goals. Include a mix of open-ended and multiple-choice questions.

2. Customize and Brand: Add your branding elements (logo, colors, and themes) to ensure the form aligns with the prototype or project identity.

3. Add Conditional Logic: Use Typeform's logic branching feature to tailor questions based on user responses, keeping the survey relevant and engaging.

4. Share with Test Participants: Share the form with participants via a unique link, email, or embed it directly into your website or prototype platform.

5. Collect and Analyze Feedback: Monitor real-time responses through Typeform's dashboard. Export data to tools like Google Sheets or Excel for in-depth analysis.

PROS

1. **User-Friendly Interface:** Typeform's intuitive design makes it easy to create and distribute forms without requiring technical expertise.
2. **Engaging and Interactive Forms:** The conversational style of presenting one question at a time enhances user engagement, leading to higher completion rates.
3. **Customization and Branding:** Offers extensive customization options, allowing forms to be tailored to match brand aesthetics.
4. **Conditional Logic (Logic Jumps):** Enables the creation of dynamic forms that adapt based on user responses, improving the relevance of questions presented.

CONS

1. **Limited Features in Free Plan:** The free version offers restricted functionalities, which may not suffice for users requiring advanced features.
2. **Cost Considerations:** Paid plans can be relatively expensive, especially for small businesses or startups with limited budgets.
3. **Basic Analytics:** Built-in analytics are somewhat limited; users seeking in-depth data analysis may need to rely on external tools.
4. **Response Limits:** Certain plans impose limits on the number of responses, which could be restrictive for large-scale surveys.

Typeform is accessible via its official website www.typeform.com. It is a web-based tool, meaning users can access and create forms directly through a browser without the need for downloads. Typeform also offers a mobile-friendly interface, enabling users to engage with surveys seamlessly across devices. The platform operates on a freemium model, with both free and paid plans available.

6. Andragogic Strategies

"Proposed pedagogic strategies tailored to the field of VET, to ensure effective implementation of Design Thinking principles"
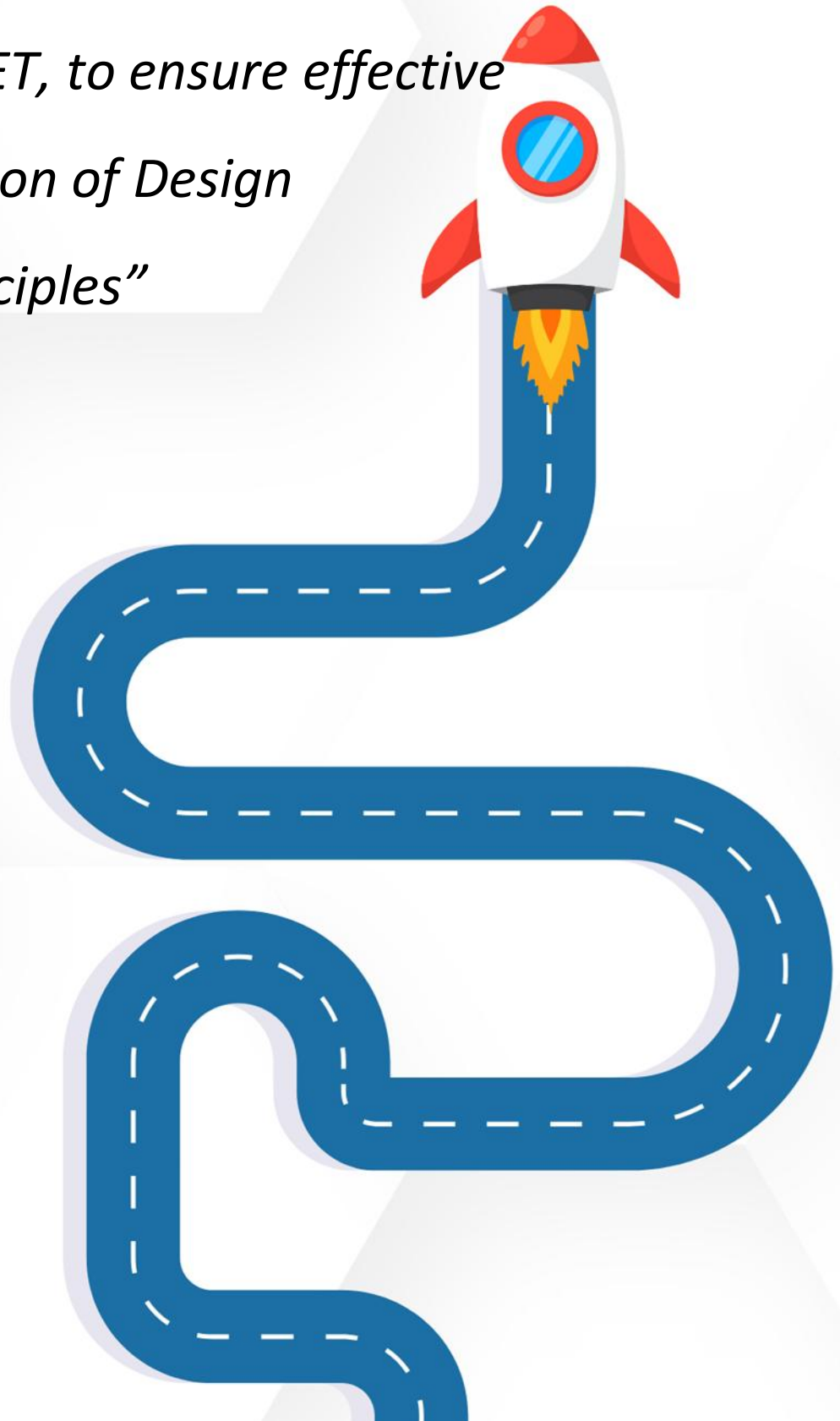
6.1 Empathy Walks

Description of Strategy:

Empathy Walks involve learners engaging directly with the environments or contexts of the users they are designing for. This strategy helps participants gain firsthand insights into user experiences, enhancing their ability to empathize and frame problems effectively.
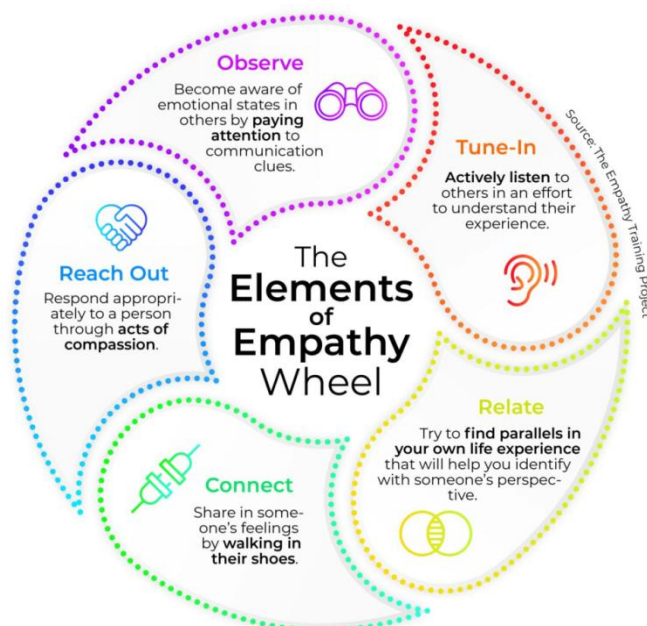
Target Audience:

Adult learners, VET trainers, and vocational students in fields like healthcare, hospitality, or retail.

Andragogic Relevance:

Adult learners are often motivated by real-world application. Empathy Walks engage learners in experiential learning by immersing them in authentic user contexts, fostering practical understanding.

Adult Focus:

The strategy acknowledges that adult learners bring prior experiences, which they can apply and reflect upon during the activity.

The
Elements
of
Empathy
Wheel

Observe
Become aware of emotional states in others by **paying attention** to communication clues.

Tune-In
Actively listen to others in an effort to understand their experience.

Reach Out
Respond appropriately to a person through **acts of compassion**.

Relate
Try to **find parallels in your own life experience** that will help you identify with someone's perspective.

Connect
Share in someone's feelings by **walking in their shoes**.

Source: The Empathy Training Project

Steps to Implement:

1. Identify the target users and the context for the Design Thinking challenge.

2. Organize visits or observational sessions in the users' environments *(e.g., workplaces, service locations).*

3. Provide participants with note-taking tools and prompts to guide their observations *(e.g., "What are users struggling with?").*

4. Facilitate a debrief session where learners synthesize insights using empathy maps or affinity diagrams.

Resources and Materials	Expected Benefits	Measurable Outcomes	Adjustments for Different Contexts
Observation checklists or guides *Notebooks, pens, or digital* *note-taking tools* *Transportation and safety arrangements (if visiting external sites)*	*Deepens understanding of user challenges and needs* *Enhances observational and critical thinking skills* *Fosters a user-centered mindset*	*Quality and depth of insights documented* *Improved user-centric problem statements*	*For remote learners, use virtual tools like videos or user interviews* *Adapt prompts and tools for younger or less experienced participants.*

6.2 Prototyping Workshops

Description of Strategy:

Prototyping workshops engage learners in hands-on creation, where they build low-fidelity models of their solutions. This strategy fosters innovation and practical problem-solving skills.

Target Audience:

Vocational students in technical, design, or service-oriented fields.

Andragogic Relevance:

Adults prefer hands-on, problem-solving activities that directly connect to their professional contexts. Prototyping workshops allow them to work on practical, tangible solutions, leveraging their skills and creativity.

Adult Focus:

The iterative nature of prototyping aligns with adult learners' preference for self-directed and outcome-oriented learning.

Steps to Implement:

1. Present a challenge or problem statement.

2. Provide materials and tools for rapid prototyping *(e.g., paper, cardboard, software).*

3. Encourage participants to create multiple prototypes quickly, focusing on usability and feasibility.

4. Conduct a feedback session where peers or stakeholders interact with and critique the prototypes.

Resources and Materials	Expected Benefits	Measurable Outcomes	Adjustments for Different Contexts
Physical prototyping tools: cardboard, markers, glue, scissors *Digital tools: Figma, Sketch, or 3D modeling software*	*Builds creativity and problem-solving skills* *Encourages iterative thinking and constructive feedback* *Prepares learners for real-world applications of design concepts*	*Number and diversity of prototypes generated* *Quality of feedback received and integrated into iterations*	*For online learners, use digital prototyping tools and virtual feedback sessions.* *Scale down for resource-limited environments by focusing on sketches and simple models.*

6.3 Role-Playing Scenarios

Description of Strategy:

Role-playing scenarios allow learners to simulate real-world challenges and solutions, fostering empathy and understanding of user perspectives.

Target Audience:

VET learners in fields like healthcare, customer service, and education.

Andragogic Relevance:

This strategy builds on adults' ability to draw from real-life experiences and apply them in simulated settings. Role-playing promotes empathy and situational problem-solving, both critical for vocational contexts.

Adult Focus:

It caters to the experiential learning cycle by enabling active participation, reflection, and application.

Steps to Implement:

1. Define a scenario related to the Design Thinking challenge (e.g., assisting a difficult customer).

2. Assign roles to participants (e.g., user, service provider, observer).

3. Conduct the role-play, encouraging participants to stay in character.

4. Facilitate a reflection session to discuss insights and potential solutions.

Resources and Materials	Expected Benefits	Measurable Outcomes	Adjustments for Different Contexts
Scenario scripts or prompts *Costumes or props (optional for immersion)* *Reflection tools (e.g., journals, discussion guides)*	*Enhances empathy and problem-solving skills* *Prepares learners for real-world interpersonal challenges* *Fosters active learning and engagement*	*Learner feedback on the scenario's relevance* *Observed improvement in empathy and interpersonal skills*	*For remote learners, use video conferencing and breakout rooms for role-play.* *Simplify scenarios for younger or less experienced participants.*

6.4 Idea Pitch Sessions

Description of Strategy:

Idea pitch sessions involve learners presenting their solutions to peers or stakeholders, simulating real-world pitching scenarios and fostering confidence and communication skills.

Target Audience:

VET students and trainers in business, marketing, or entrepreneurial programs.

Andragogic Relevance:

Adults value opportunities to develop skills that directly translate to their professional lives. Pitch sessions mimic real-world presentations, enhancing communication and critical thinking.

Adult Focus:

The strategy leverages adults' intrinsic motivation for career advancement and their capacity to synthesize and articulate complex ideas.

Steps to Implement:

1. Have learners develop a solution and create a concise presentation or pitch.

2. Organize a pitching session with a panel of peers, instructors, or external stakeholders.

3. Provide structured feedback using rubrics or criteria *(e.g., clarity, feasibility).*

4. Reflect on the feedback and refine the solution.

Resources and Materials	Expected Benefits	Measurable Outcomes	Adjustments for Different Contexts
Presentation tools: slides, posters, or prototypes *Feedback rubrics or scoring sheets* *Projectors or video conferencing tools*	*Builds communication and presentation skills* *Enhances critical thinking through feedback integration* *Encourages professional readiness*	*Improved clarity and persuasiveness in pitches* *Quality of refinements based on feedback*	*For resource-limited settings, use oral presentations without digital tools.* *Adapt for online settings using video pitches and asynchronous feedback.*

6.5 Reflective Journals

Description of Strategy:

Reflective journals encourage learners to document their Design Thinking journey, fostering self-awareness and critical analysis.

Target Audience:

All VET learners, especially in fields emphasizing personal development, such as teaching or healthcare.

Andragogic Relevance:

Reflection is a cornerstone of adult learning, as it allows learners to process their experiences and internalize new knowledge. Reflective journals foster deeper engagement and personal growth.

Adult Focus:

This strategy supports self-directed learning, enabling adults to take ownership of their progress and adapt their approaches based on insights.

Steps to Implement:

1. Introduce the purpose of reflective journals in capturing insights and growth.

2. Provide prompts to guide reflections (e.g., "What did I learn today?").

3. Encourage learners to document their thoughts regularly during the Design Thinking process.

4. Review journals periodically to track progress and provide feedback.

Resources and Materials	Expected Benefits	Measurable Outcomes	Adjustments for Different Contexts
Physical journals or notebooks *Digital tools: Google Docs, Notion, or OneNote* *Reflection prompts or templates*	*Develops self-awareness and analytical thinking* *Encourages deeper engagement with the Design Thinking process* *Creates a record of personal and team progress*	*Quality and depth of reflections recorded* *Observed growth in critical thinking and problem-solving skills*	*For online learners, use digital journaling platforms.* *Adapt prompts for different literacy levels or learning styles.*

These pedagogic strategies ensure that VET learners effectively apply Design Thinking principles, fostering practical skills, empathy, and innovation in their respective fields.

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