

Social Innovation

Unit 5: Design Thinking for Social Innovation

This unit is focused on learning about design thinking which is a tool.

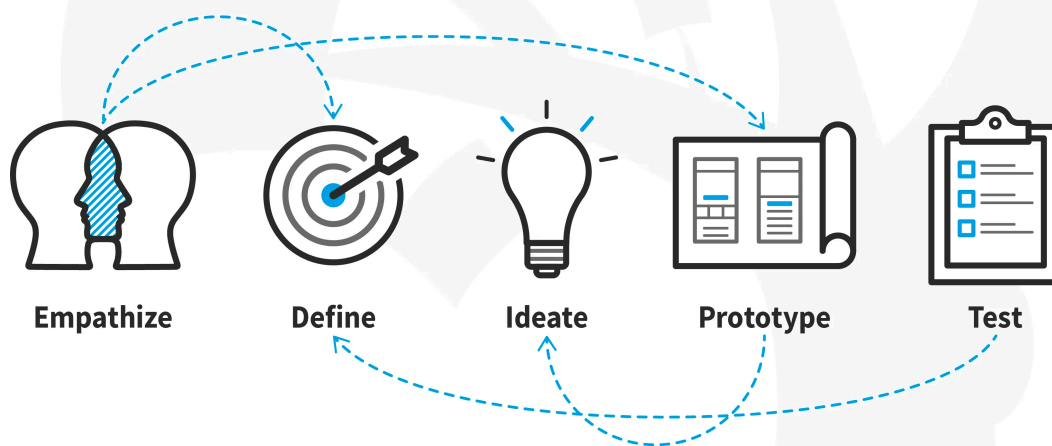
The objectives of this unit is

- to understand the concept of design thinking
- to acquaint with the steps of design thinking
- to integrate design thinking into further idea generation
- to learn to relate previously discussed topics in relation to design thinking.

Design thinking is generally defined as an analytic and creative process that engages a person in opportunities to experiment, create and prototype models, gather feedback, and redesign (Razzouk, R., & Shute, V. (2012). It has also been a part of the collective consciousness of design researchers since Rowe used it as the title of his 1987 book (Rowe, 1987).

Design thinking can be considered as a process as well as a mindset and is widely viewed as a holistic and creative approach for addressing ‘wicked problems’ where multiple spheres and fields collide and exploring better future (Docherty, 2017). It combines user needs with the feasibility and viability of creating the product of those specifications.

Design Thinking: A 5-Stage Process



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There are five steps in design thinking. The steps in design thinking are emphasize, define, ideate, prototype and test. It is a reiterating process which means there are chances of skipping a step in the process, redoing the process back and forth and working on two or more processes at the same time.

We need to understand that design thinking is a tool and before even thinking of using design thinking for social innovation there are three factors we must consider. Viability of the project is very important since this helps us understand whether we are business oriented or not. During the design process it is also important to think with humans at the core since desirability by consumers matters a lot. It is also integral to explore the feasibility which forms the technical aspect of the process.

Viability, desirability and feasibility is necessary since innovation can take place when these three factors work together. Innovation therefore is a subset of business oriented, human centered and technically sound approach.

To understand viability means to be optimal and relatable to the end users. Feasibility is all about possibility and desirability is in relation to necessity of the product/ services.

We as human beings think in two ways. The two ways we use to think are called divergent thinking and convergent thinking. Divergent thinking approach helps us come up with multiple choices. On the other hand, convergent thinking helps us make choices. It is important to think in both ways. It is absolutely necessary to have multiple choices to choose from to make choices.

As a design thinker we need to be able to first generate multiple choices and then to make the right choice. There are certain activities done to simplify the process. It is also known as 3I. Ideation, inspiration and implementation are the core activities in design thinking.

Ideation helps in the phase of generating ideas. It also fosters our creativity. Inspiration comes next which provides inspiration to work further. It shows use the path ahead. Implementation is the final activity which helps us see and analyze the actual result.

The journey itself is very complicated. Early on it is full of roses and gives us high hopes but gradually in the middle phases it gets complicated and gives us a lot of stress. This is because, we live in a VUCA world. The environment around us is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. Not everything goes as per our plan. However, if we do not lose hope are perseverant and have a positive mindset it gradually leads us to gain confidence again.

To summarize, design thinking is an important tool in social innovation. It is an important tool because it helps simplify the process of social innovation. However, it is critical to understand that we cannot just rely on design thinking and need to get acquainted and be able to use other tools as well. These tools will be discussed in further sessions.

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