



XXI Adults

**Adaptation of the adult educational
system to the XXI Century**

The Good Practices Template



INSTITUTE for
ROMA and
MINORITIES
INCLUSION



**DIPUTACIÓN
DE VALLADOLID**



E-SCHOOL
EDUCATIONAL GROUP



EMPODERAR
DESENVOLVIMENTO ORGANIZACIONAL, SOCIAL, PROFISSIONAL E PESSOAL



Co-funded by
the European Union



Name of the Good Practice

Human-Centered Innovation through Design Thinking (HPI School of Design Thinking, Potsdam)

Summary of the Practice

Brief, easy-to-understand summary: What is the practice, for whom, and for what purpose?

This good practice is a **creative learning model** that empowers **adult learners**, including professionals, educators, and innovators, to solve complex real-world problems using the **Design Thinking methodology**. Offered by the Hasso Plattner Institute, the program provides a **blended, hands-on educational experience** where participants work in **diverse teams** to co-create solutions to challenges from business, education, or civil society.

Through a structured process of **empathy, ideation, prototyping, and testing**, learners gain key 21st-century competences such as **digital literacy, innovation, collaboration, and entrepreneurship**. The goal is to build **creative confidence** and equip adults with the tools and mindsets needed to **drive innovation** in their communities, organizations, and careers.

Description of the Practice – min. 2000 characters

1) Context / Background

What was the initial need or problem?

Who was the target group?

Was it part of a larger programme or project?

As societies and labor markets grow more complex and digital, adults in professional and civic contexts increasingly lack the creative and collaborative problem-solving skills needed to address uncertain, rapidly evolving challenges. Traditional adult education models often emphasize theoretical learning and individual performance, failing to prepare learners for the real-world, team-based innovation environments found in today's economy and society.

The primary target group includes adult learners such as professionals, educators, entrepreneurs, and public sector workers from a wide variety of disciplines. The program also reaches people in mid-career or those transitioning between sectors who seek to develop innovation capabilities and digital collaboration skills.

Yes. The HPI School of Design Thinking is the first academic institution in Europe based on the model of Stanford University's d.school and is embedded within the Hasso Plattner Institute for Digital Engineering. The school offers part-time, semester-based programs and continuing education for professionals as part of a broader international network promoting design thinking.

2) Objectives

What were the goals of the practice?

What did it aim to improve or change?

Primary Objectives:

- Equip adults with tools and mindsets for creative, human-centered problem-solving.
- Foster digital and collaborative competences essential for innovation.
- Encourage cross-sector, interdisciplinary cooperation.





- Bridge the gap between academic thinking and real-world application.

Intended Changes:

- Move participants from linear, solution-focused thinking to iterative, user-centered approaches.
- Cultivate a culture of experimentation and empathy in professional and educational contexts.
- Promote new attitudes toward teamwork and failure as part of the learning process.

3) Implementation / Methodology

How was the practice carried out step by step?

What activities or methods were used?

How long did it take?

Step-by-Step Implementation:

1. **Participant Selection:** A diverse cohort is selected based on motivation, background diversity (sector, age, discipline), and openness to new learning models.
2. **Onboarding & Training:** Initial workshops introduce the design thinking framework and collaborative tools (both physical and digital, such as Miro, Zoom, and prototyping kits).
3. **Team Formation:** Small, interdisciplinary teams of 5–6 people are created and matched with real-world challenges from partner organizations.
4. **Project Work:** Teams go through the five design thinking phases—**Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, and Test**—using agile and creative methods.
5. **Coaching & Reflection:** Teams are supported by trained coaches and facilitators who guide their process and encourage meta-learning and reflection.
6. **Final Presentations & Iteration:** Results are shared with external stakeholders; feedback leads to further refinements or real-world implementation.

Key Methods Used:

- Rapid prototyping
- User interviews and empathymapping
- Brainstorming techniques
- Feedback cycles
- Digital whiteboards and collaboration tools

4) Results / Outcomes

What were the concrete results?

How did the practice impact the participants?





Concrete Results:

- Over 3,000 professionals trained in design thinking and digital collaboration since the program's inception.
- Numerous practical solutions developed in health care, urban mobility, education, and environmental sustainability.
- Participants report significantly increased creative confidence, collaboration skills, and willingness to take initiative.

Impact on Participants:

- Participants felt empowered to approach complex challenges with a creative mindset.
- Many reported transformative changes in how they approached leadership and teamwork in their jobs.
- Alumni have introduced design thinking into their own institutions, multiplying the impact.

5) Participants' Stories – optional

Short quotes, personal reflections or experiences shared by participant

6) Success Factors

What made the practice effective or innovative?

Were there any unique or creative elements?

What Made the Practice Effective or Innovative:

- A structured but flexible methodology that adapts well to adult learning.
- Emphasis on **“learning by doing”**—participants work on real problems in real teams.
- An environment of **psychological safety** that encourages risk-taking and experimentation.
- Interdisciplinary team setup encourages rich, diverse viewpoints.

Unique/Creative Elements:

- Integration of **empathy** and **storytelling** into problem-solving.
- Use of blended learning and remote collaboration tools even before the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Role of professional design coaches embedded in each team.

7) Transferability / Recommendations

Can the practice be used elsewhere?





What conditions are needed for successful implementation?

Can the Practice Be Used Elsewhere?

Yes. Design thinking is a globally transferable model adaptable to adult education centers, NGOs, public administration, and corporate environments.

Conditions for Successful Implementation:

- Skilled facilitators or coaches trained in design thinking
- A flexible learning space (physical or virtual) conducive to experimentation
- Real-world challenges sourced from the local context
- Willingness of institutions to embrace open-ended, non-linear learning processes

8) Tips / Implementation Advice – optional

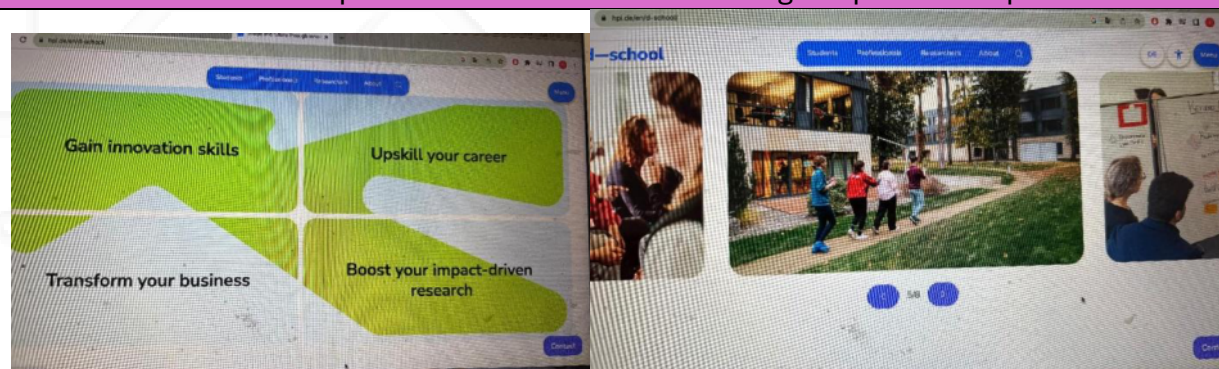
Checklists, lessons, or advice for those wishing to implement the practice.

9) Lessons Learned - optional

Biggest surprises, obstacles or key takeaways during implementation.

10) Photos illustrating the described practice)

Please attach at least 3 photos related to the described good practice– optional





☒ Non-formal

☐ Informal

SKILLS / COMPETENCES DEVELOPED

☐ Literacy (reading, writing, comprehension)

☒ Numeracy (maths, logical thinking)

☒ Digital skills

☒ STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics)

☒ Personal, social and learning to learn

☒ Civic competences

☒ Entrepreneurship

☒ Cultural awareness and expression

☒ Language skills

☒ Job-related / vocational skills

☐ Green competences

☐ Other (specify):

POTENTIAL USERS

☒ Teachers / Educators

☒ Administrative staff

☒ School / Centre management

☒ Policy makers / Public administration

☒ NGOs / Community organizations

☐ Other (specify):





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