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This week we are going to also start thinking creatively.

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We are going to look at a particular approach called “design thinking”. It's a way of creative thinking that fosters innovation and involves re-conceptualising the role of the teacher and the role of the learner.

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You're going to be able to watch a video on design thinking just to get a sense of how people use it in an educational context.

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And you'll be able to explore some resources because design thinking is becoming much more dominant in education, even in higher education, because it encourages and rewards thinking outside of the box and thinking about real-world solutions; which is fabulous for a program like ours where it's really important that we consider the individual context. This PowerPoint is going to be introducing you to some of the core concepts in design thinking. Which you can then take and explore further on your own.

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So, what is design thinking? Design thinking is an iterative process which means it never reaches perfection. It starts with generating an understanding of the person, the people, and the audience for whom you are designing. It works on:

* Refining and re-focusing your questions and ideas based on the insights that you get from your participants.
* Coming up with ideas and creative solutions and testing them and trying them out with your participants.
* Prototyping which is about generating a sense of what the solution might be, building a representation of those ideas.
* And then testing that and getting a better understanding of how your audience interact with and think about the design you have come up with.

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The idea of design thinking is that it is a combination between, feasibility, viability, and desirability. Most often we start with what's possible because we are operating in a context where there are constraints. Design thinking suggests that we start with what is desirable, with what we really think will be the best solution for a problem. Then we go and see how feasible and viable it might be.

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The first stage of design thinking focuses on empathy, which is about understanding your learners' experiences. Let's just do a bit of an empathy exercise ourselves for a moment. Why don't you pause the video and think about what the absolute best learning experience you have ever had when using technology. What did you say? What did you do? How did you think? What did you feel? Those four words are the common words that are used in what's called an empathy mapping exercise. Contrast that with what the worst experience you've ever had learning with technology. Just take a bit of time to reflect on your own and use those 4 words of say, do, think, and feel to note your reactions to those two experiences.

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How did that feel? It's quite interesting because often we reflect on our own experiences, but we don't get an insight into those feelings and ways of thinking that our learners experience. I would like you to think about your teaching and learning challenge or opportunity that you have identified and are going to begin to work on this week . Who is your audience? Who might the learners be? Might it be your colleagues or your students? What might they say, do, think, and feel about that? Often in empathy mapping exercises one goes out and asks people, who might be part of your audience group, these same questions. You might say to them, "I'm seeing that there is a problem with the way you engage in the class when I'm teaching. When I do this, what do you say, think, feel and do as a result of it? If I did something else what might you say, do, think or feel." It gives you opportunities to understand your students' reactions to particular challenges and problems that they might face in their learning. There is a lot about the design thinking approach that is about trying to understand the problem from the user and participants' experience.

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If this interests you, have a look at some of the open educational resources on design thinking. If you go to the OER Commons and search for "design thinking" you will find a few open education resources that might be quite useful in giving you examples of how other educators have used design thinking with their learners or to create solutions.

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Once we've got a better understanding of our audience for whom we are designing; and we've thought about the question/problem/issue that we are tackling from the perspective of our users, and have better insights from their persepctive, we'll be able to define our problem a little bit better. We’ll be able to be clearer on what the actual problem is. Maybe the problem is not about students engaging in learning, maybe it's about the fact that students come to school hungry, or students aren’t interested in a particular content area that is being taught (they are not excited and motivated by it). So, you’ve got to get a deeper understanding of the problem in order to come up with a better solution for it.

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Take some time to think about your learning and teaching challenge. Seek input from someone else about what they think about the problem. Ask a colleague, ask somebody in your family, ask a young person. Get a better understanding of what they think about it so that it helps you define more clearly what the problem actually is.

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The next part of design thinking is to generate ideas for solutions. Remember those circles I showed you where desirability was the place you needed to start? Do a quick brainstorming exercise, get yourself a pen and paper, maybe you prefer to type something on the computer, and participate in what they call the “ideation phase”. Which is where you brainstorm and come up with some creative ideas and solutions. Don't judge them, so don't think about how feasible the idea is, just write down any idea that comes to mind. Build on ideas of others, don't feel bad about borrowing others ideas and making them better. Do as many as you can, don't just try and write a limited list. Try and encourage wild ideas and go for quantity. That's the first place to start. Then you can check in with other people.

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And with your audience again about which of these ideas might be more feasible, or viable, and which might better meet the needs of your participants/students. When you've identified one or two ideas that are floating up to the top of your list, go through the process of doing a rapid prototype. Now, prototype doesn't mean you have to come up with a solution. We can have a fantastic idea which might be to design an application for something, but I'm not sure we would all have the skills to do that, but you certainly can build a representation of one of your ideas to show other people and try it out.

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Get creative when you do this, again, you can prototype with sticky notes, drawings, a mind map tool, Postit notes (using a tool like Padlet), or perhaps even developing an infographic which might show a set of content and how it can all come together and relate to each other. Think of a way that makes the most sense to you and capture your idea which you are then going to share with other people in your group.

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If you want a bit of extra support on how to go about using this process to generate your creative solution, again you could go to the OER Commons website and have a look for the resources they have for design thinking. One really useful one I found was how to do design thinking for teachers. It was an OER guide that teachers use to go through the various processes in the design thinking phase.

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Another really useful resource which you can go to is the website designthinkingforeducators.com. They have tool kits for teachers. You will need to give them your email address in order to get access to the toolkit and they aren't available as an open education resource. But they are free to use and download. Both of these might help you in your journey to develop a solution using digital technologies that will best meet the needs of your learners or your audience and be creative at the same time. Good luck with your learning journey and thank you.