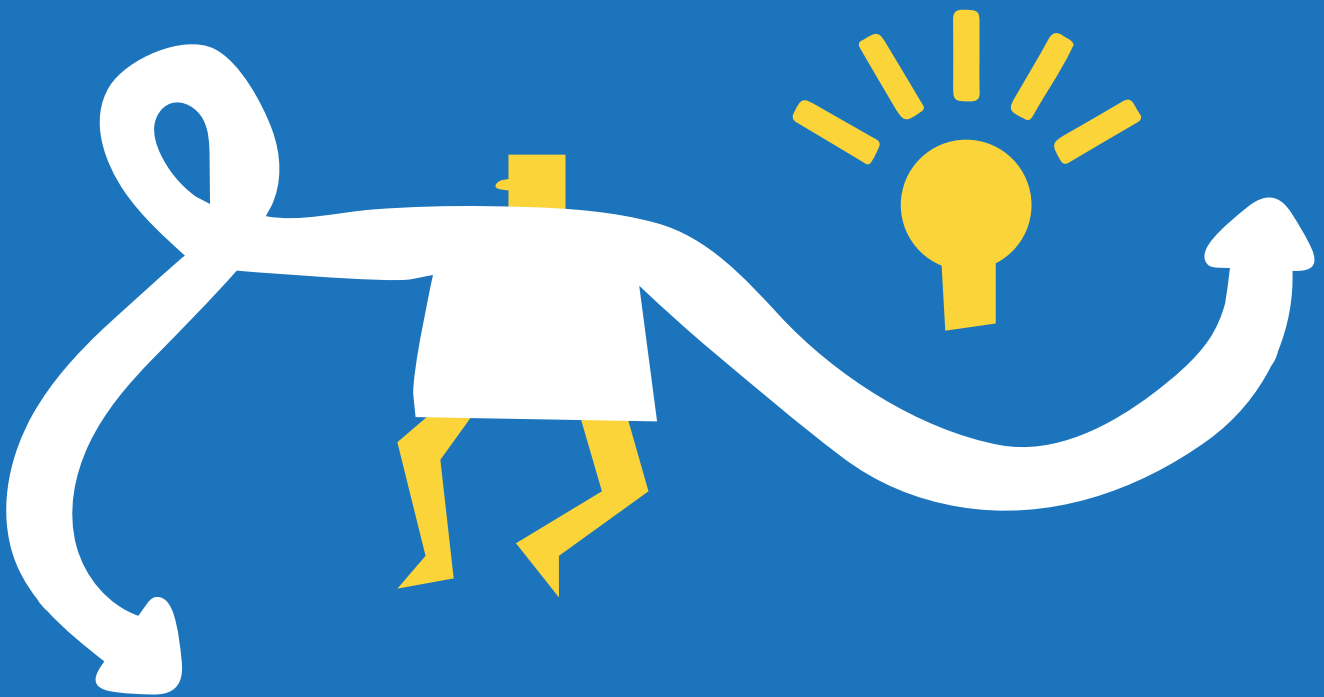# Design thinking approach to placement design

Facilitator directions developed for the EU KA2 MentorTrain project

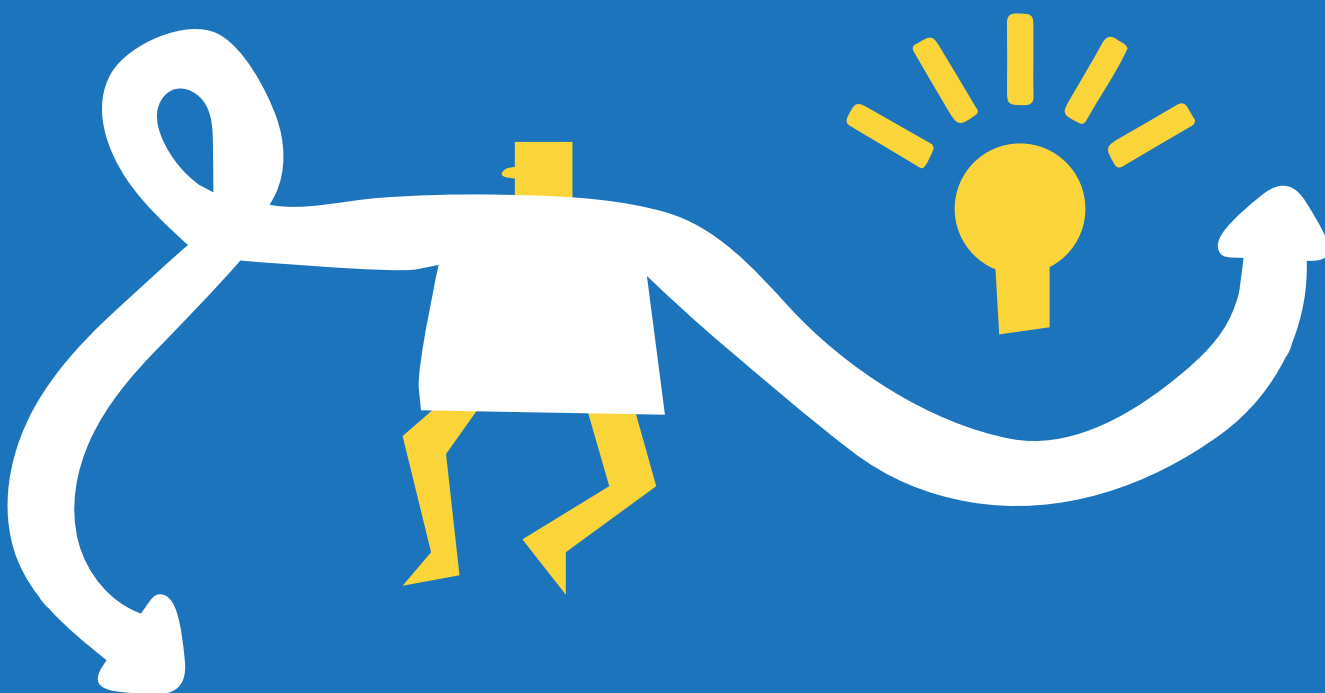MentorTrain

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General Information

This workshop has been designed for experienced apprenticeship managers/mentors from different businesses in a specific field and to be delivered to a group of between 6 to 10 participants at a time. The workshop is designed to be delivered in 4 hours and there is a comfort break included within this time of about 30 minutes. The philosophy, which underpins this workshop, is one of active participation, positive contribution and learning from each other.

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Background and purpose of the workshop

This workshop is developed through the EU funded Erasmus+ project MentorTrain. The prime aim of this project is to train and equip mentors in small organisations to provide quality apprenticeships. For this purpose, the project has created a course aimed at prospective and early-stage mentors, made up of a set of modular online micro-learning units, each of which allowing participants to master a specific competence relevant to quality mentoring.

In addition to the training tools for mentors, the MentorTrain project wants to assist experienced mentors in designing detailed training-plans for specific placements. For this, the project consortium has developed a workshop format using "A Design-Thinking Approach for Defining Placements", which we are piloting in 4 different countries and 12 different occupations. The result of this workshop is therefore to design a detailed ideal apprenticeship-profile for [Occupation X]. The apprenticeship-profile created through this workshop and similar workshops that take place around other occupational areas will eventually be added to an online database of apprenticeship profiles and these profiles can be freely consulted, copied or repurpose to create adapted ones.

NB it should be clearly explained to participating mentors that the workshop has a limited scope in as much that it only takes the views of Mentors into account and they might need to follow it up with an additional workshop with university representatives/apprenticeship supervisors to further discuss and develop the existing apprenticeship competence frameworks according to the outcomes of these workshops.
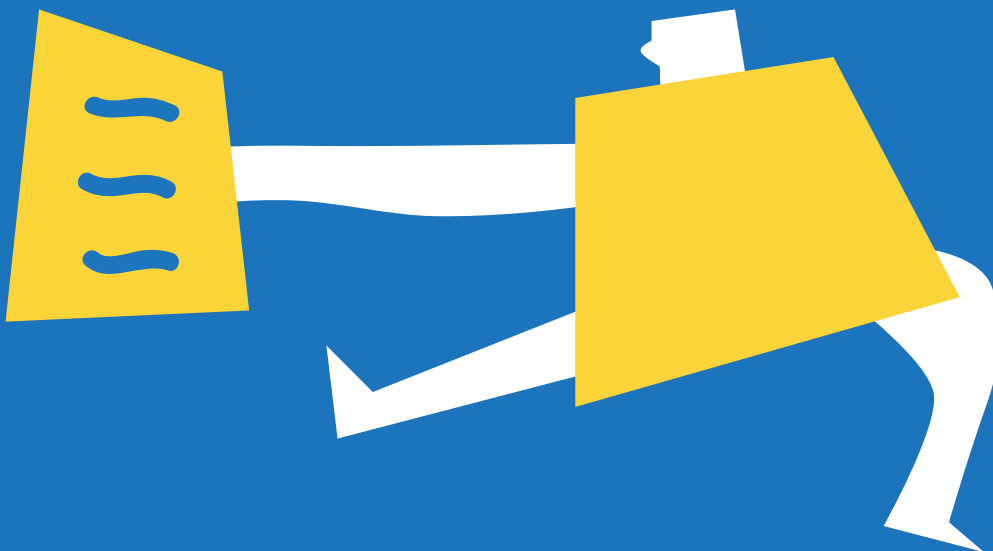
Workshop alternatives

1 Follow the structure outlined below. This is particularly useful for countries where no competence framework for apprenticeships exist.

2 Concentrate the workshop focus on specific gaps in the existing apprenticeship competence frameworks, which can be different in different countries. For example, looking specifically at concrete apprenticeship activities where the existing framework only describes competences or on competences/learning outcomes where the framework only looks at concrete activities.

3 Disregard existing apprenticeship competence frameworks and take an 'ideal world' approach, where the focus of the workshops is specifically on developing "ideal" apprenticeship profiles form the perspective of Mentors. These can then be compared with existing frameworks and perhaps serve towards improving/adjusting these.
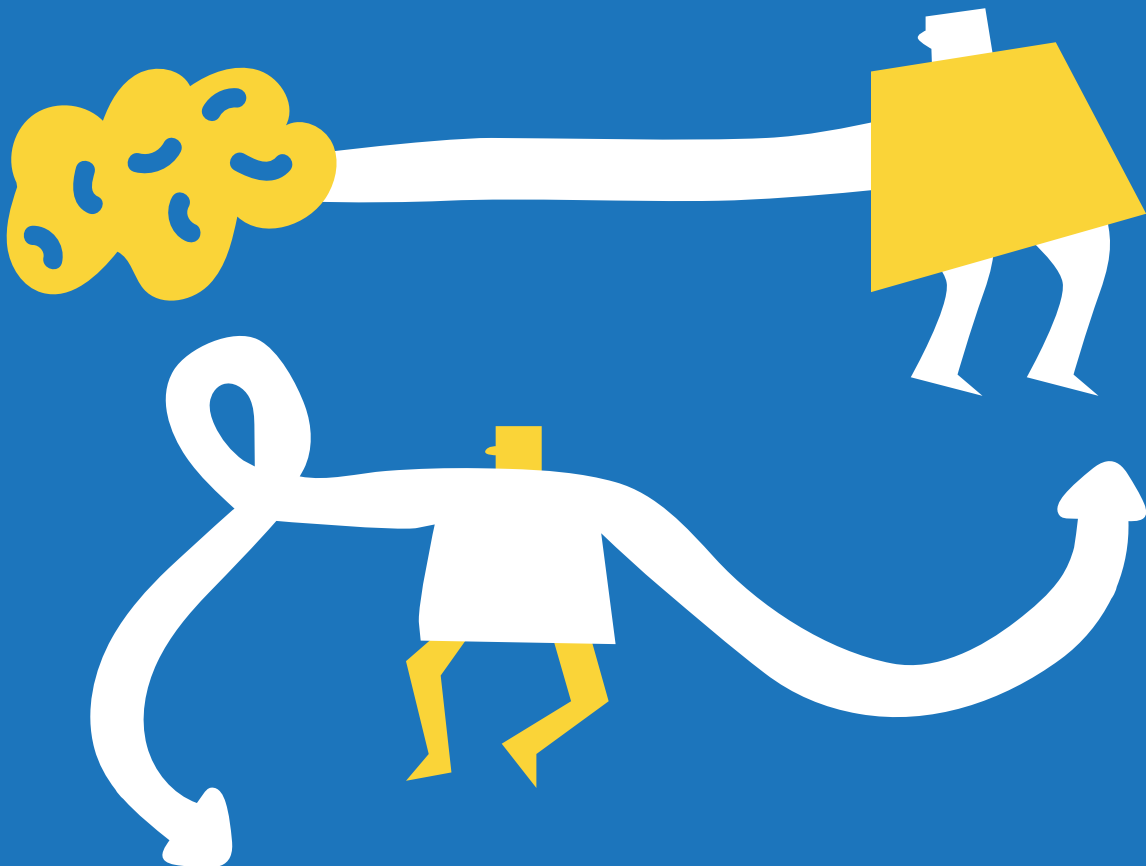
Agenda of the workshop

For more details see Facilitating Notes below

➡ **Introduction**	**30 min**
➡ **Phase 1: Building empathy for the learner apprentice**	**45 min**
➡ **Phase 2: Define a problem statement (10 minutes)**	**15 min**
➡ **Break**	**30 min**
➡ **Phase 3: Ideation**	**45 min**
➡ **Phase 4: Prototype**	**60 min**
➡ **Conclusions/evaluation**	**15 min**

Total duration: 4 hours
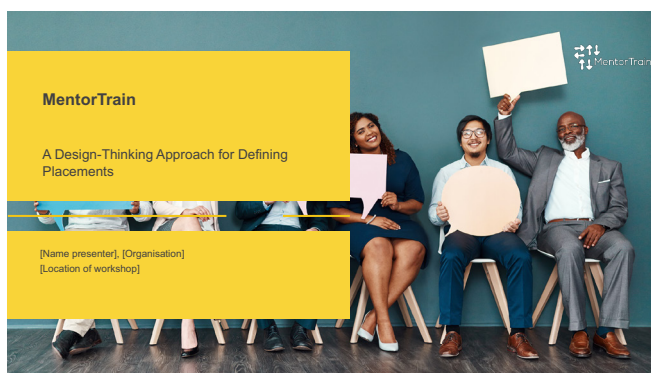
Facilitating Notes

Please note the following:

- Each section of the workshop is briefly introduced in the yellow text boxes.
- Throughout the facilitating notes, information included in italics are 'stage directions' for the facilitator.
- Information in the standard type face and in the PowerPoint slides are 'scripts' for the facilitator.
- Concrete text suggestions are indicated in the bold type face.

Introduction

In this section the facilitator will be providing an introduction to the workshop, going through the aims and intended outcomes of the workshop, the main topics that will be covered as well as introducing the facilitator and the group to each other.

Introduction of facilitator(s) & background	Slide 1: Introduction of facilitator(s) & Background
Introduction of MentorTrain project	Slide 2: Introduction of MentorTrain project

Introduction of the participants

The facilitator goes round the room to find out what the background is of the participants, where do they come from, what work they do, and how are they involved in managing apprenticeships/ mentoring.

If possible, this information should already be available beforehand and be used in the design of the workshop in terms of how to develop and frame debriefs throughout the workshop and to use more applicable examples. Remember to make a note of the key background characteristics and have visible name tags available.

Group Discussion

Overview of the workshop

Presentation by the facilitator of the different topics that are being covered in this workshop.

Slide 3: Overview of the workshop

Overview of the workshop

- Introduction to the Design Thinking Approach

- Phase 1: Building empathy for the learner apprentice
- Phase 2: Define a problem statement
- Phase 3: Ideation
- Phase 4: Prototype

- Conclusions/evaluation

Introduction Design Thinking Approach

Presentation of the Design Thinking Approach by the facilitator.

Text suggestion:

"Design Thinking is a methodology used by designers to solve complex problems and find desirable solutions. It's a people- centred and collaborative approach to problem solving that is creative, iterative, and practical. It's the essential ability to combine empathy, creativity, and rationality to meet user needs and drive business success.

Slide 4: Introduction Design Thinking Approach

Introduction Design Thinking Approach

A design mindset is not problem-focused, its solution focused and action oriented towards creating a preferred future. Design Thinking draws upon logic, imagination, intuition, and systemic reasoning, to explore the possibilities of what could be – and to create desired outcomes that benefit the end user.

Design Thinking offers a structured framework with different steps that help to understand and pursue innovation in ways that contribute to organic growth and add real value to our work. The design thinking cycle involves observation to discover unmet needs within the context and constraints of a particular situation, framing the opportunity and scope of innovation, generating creative ideas, testing and refining solutions."

The facilitator can use Slide 4 to further explain the different phases of the approach, but emphasize that it's just a method we use for the workshop and that the   practical application will become clearer in the rest of the workshop.

During the presentation, the facilitator asks the participants if they are familiar with this approach. If so, participants can provide further input. The facilitator can also try to ask for and/or give concrete examples, preferably related to the professional context of the participants.

Slide 4: Introduction Design Thinking Approach

Phase 1: Building empathy for the learner apprentice

The aim of this session is to encourage the participants to put themselves in the position of a prospective apprentice, building empathy with apprentices and getting to understand their needs, expectations, and behaviours. This first session also endeavours to bring the participants to a similar level of understanding about a student-centred approach to designing model apprenticeships, which can contribute to a more equal and active participation in the subsequent sessions of this training.

"Empathy"

The facilitator gives a short presentation on what is meant by empathy in the context of design thinking and why it's important to take a user/learner centred approach.

Text suggestion:

"The first step of the design thinking process is to empathize with our target groups, namely learners who are undertaking an apprenticeship in your company. To really understand what they desire or feel, what their expectations, hopes and fears are about this important part of their education, we have to engage with them. In a workshop context we are not able to speak to apprentices directly but instead a simple way of empathising is to conduct a role play in which you conduct a mock interview between a Mentor and a prospective apprentice."

Slide 5: Empathy

Phase 1: Empathy

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Building Empathy with the learner/Apprentice

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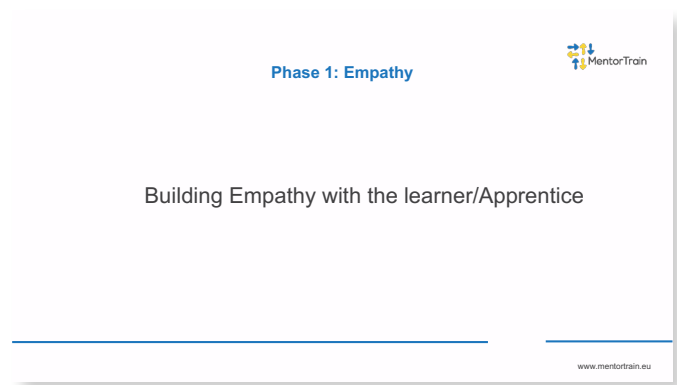
Role play activity in pairs: Mock interview of prospective apprentice

The facilitator asks the participants to pair up and take it in turns where one plays a potential apprentice interviewing to undertake an apprenticeship and the other the prospective mentor.

The facilitator provides them with some starter questions: What do you expect from an apprenticeship?
What are your hopes?
What are your fears?

Role play activity in pairs

The facilitator mentions that this exercise is intended to help participants to imagine how it feels to be a prospective apprentice, to try to put themselves in their mindset and get a better understanding of the hopes and expectations a learner has for a meaningful apprenticeship.

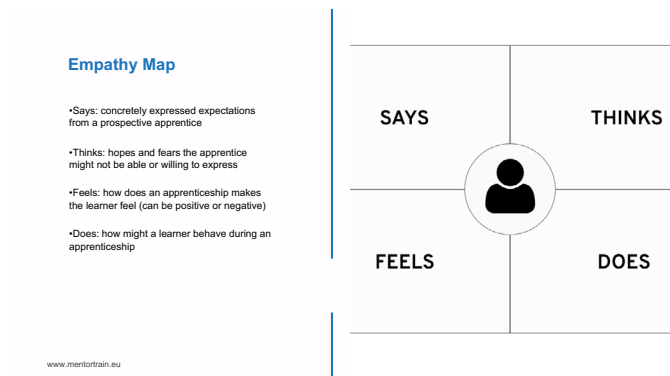## Exercise – Create Empathy map

At the end of the role play exercise the facilitator asks the different pairs to create an "empathy map" based on the observation as 'interviewer' and imagined role as 'apprentice'. In this empathy map, that can be drawn on a piece of paper or flipchart, there are four quadrants: "says", "thinks", "does", and "feels". Based on their understanding of an apprentice in the previous activity, they'll fill in each quadrant with hypothetical (or direct) quotes and observations from the role play as well as other experiences they have with apprentices .

The facilitator asks each pair to briefly present their empathy map to the rest of the group and highlights/summarizes the main points mentioned in each of the four quadrants.

The facilitator may also ask the group in general and a few random participants more specifically if they recognise these elements with regards to their own circumstances when they did an apprenticeship themselves or started their first job.

The length of this debrief will largely depend on how much the participants have discussed in the brainstorm, if this is covering ground they have already identified, do this very quickly. It is still useful to cover for those who may still be unsure but are unwilling to say so, as well as confirming that this is also what the facilitator has come up with. If it has been a struggle to engage them in the brainstorm, or they don't appear to understand it may be worth taking the time to develop this further before going to the next session.

Slide 6: Empathy map

Empathy Map

•Says: concretely expressed expectations from a prospective apprentice

•Thinks: hopes and fears the apprentice might not be able or willing to express

•Feels: how does an apprenticeship makes the learner feel (can be positive or negative)

•Does: how might a learner behave during an apprenticeship

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SAYS   THINKS

FEELS   DOES

Phase 2: Define a problem statement

This session addressed the second phase of the design thinking approach which is to define a problem statement. Normally when the design thinking approach is followed, the problem statement is not yet defined and based entirely on the previous empathy phase. However, in this workshop, we already know what "problem" we want to solve, namely the question " how might we provide an ideal apprenticeship for the occupation under consideration?"

The aim of this session is two-fold: firstly, to simply make participants aware what is the main objective of this workshop (which can also be seen as a problem statement) , and secondly, to increase their understanding that an 'ideal apprenticeship' should follow a student-centred approach and be firmly based on maximum empathy with learner- apprentices themselves.
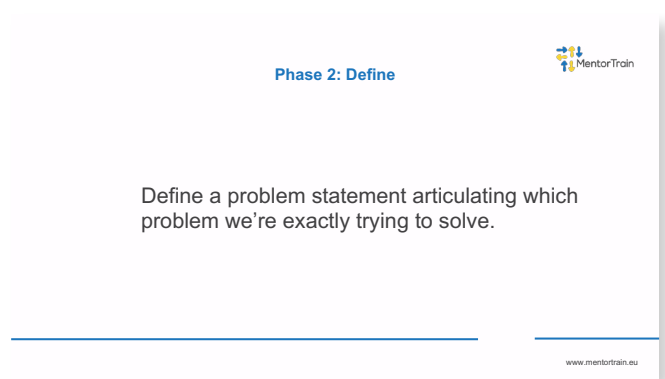
Phase 2 – 'Define a problem statement'

The facilitator briefly presents the second phase of the design thinking approach: 'Define' follows from the first 'empathy' phase and articulates which problem we're exactly trying to solve.

The facilitator then explains that the main 'Problem statement' for this workshop is already defined, namely: "how might we provide an ideal apprenticeship for the occupation under consideration?"

At this point the facilitator might need to reiterate that we are only using the design thinking approach as a pedagogical tool for this workshop and that the 'problem statement' that's presented here is actually the main objective of the workshop.

Slide 7: Phase 2 – Define a problem statement

Phase 2: Define

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Define a problem statement articulating which problem we're exactly trying to solve.

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Slide 8: Problem statement for the workshop

Problem Statement

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How might we provide an ideal apprenticeship for the occupation of [XXX]?

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Break Time

The facilitator gives a quick overview of the main topics covered before the break before moving to the next session.
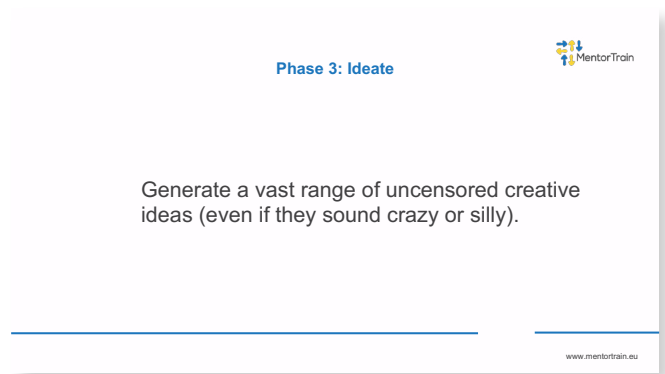
Break Time

Phase 3: Ideation

This session focuses on phase 3 of the design thinking approach which is about generating ideas that contribute to solving the defined problem from the previous step. In the context of this workshop, Ideation means generating ideas on all the different building blocks that should be part of an apprenticeship in the specific occupation. These building blocks consist of learning outcomes as well as concrete activities that contribute to the learning outcomes and the ideation phase should consider both. An additional aim of this session is therefore also to provide the participants with an understanding of the connection between learning outcomes and learning activities that form part of the apprenticeship.

Phase 3: Ideation

The facilitator gives a short presentation on what is ideation, how does it work and the most common ideation technique, Brainstorming, which the group will be using as well.

Slide 9: Ideation

Phase 3: Ideate

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Generate a vast range of uncensored creative ideas (even if they sound crazy or silly).

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Brainstorm exercise: generating ideas for the apprenticeship

The facilitator divides the participants in 2 groups and explains that each group will undertake a parallel brainstorm.

The first group will focus on the question: 'what does the apprentice need to learn/able to do' (i.e. Learning Outcomes);
The second group focusses on the question 'what activities does the apprentice need to do' (i.e. learning activities).
The facilitator explains that the brainstorm should be open minded, non-judgemental and without any 'wrong' answers. All the topics that are mentioned should be written down on a separate post-it note (a different colour for group 1 and for group 2 to be able to distinguish between the two different questions)..
The facilitator may want to provide a few examples to help them get started.

Slide 10: Brainstorm questions

Brainstorm questions

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Question 1: What does the apprentice need to learn/able to do' (i.e. learning outcomes)

Question 2: What activities does the apprentice need to do' (i.e. learning activities).

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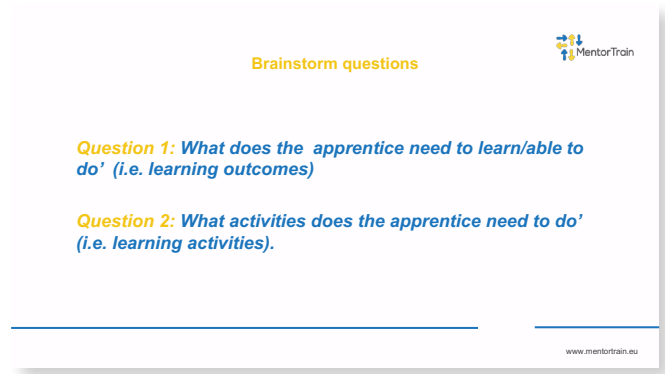
During the brainstorm, the facilitator exchanges individual participants between the two groups whilst the brainstorm continues, ensuring that by the end, everyone will have been part of both groups and contributed to both of the brainstorm questions.

After the Brainstorm, all the post-it notes with ideas are brought together and the facilitator asks from every participant to choose 5 ideas they find most important and put in front of them. (The ideas that are not chosen are put aside by the facilitator).
Once this is done, the facilitator asks everyone to briefly explain the ideas they chose and why they think these are relevant.

As a follow-up question, the facilitator asks the participants to go around and put a mark on those ideas they support (they can mark as many ideas as they like, but only with one mark each and they can't mark the ones they had chosen themselves).
The facilitator will then collect all the post its which have mark from at least 50% of all the participants. These pot its/ideas will go to the next phase. The rest will be put aside.
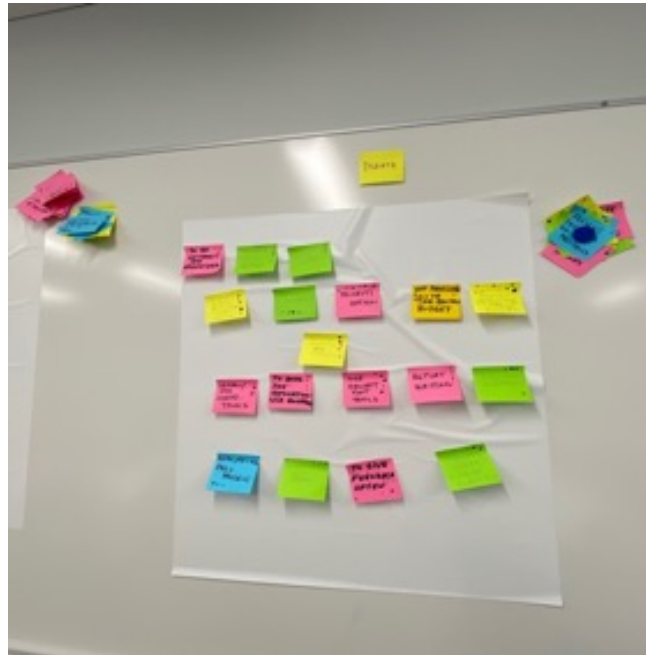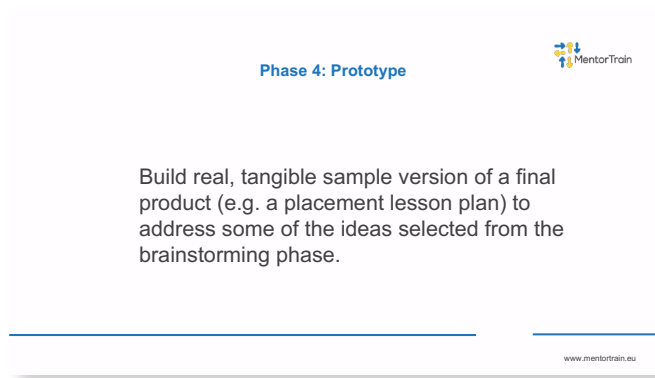
Phase 4: Prototype

In this last session of the workshop, the ideas generating in Phase 3 will now be used as building blocks to create a Prototype for an ideal apprenticeship in the specific occupation. Although the time for this workshop is not sufficient to create a perfect apprenticeship format, the aim here is still to be as concrete and realistic as possible. This includes specific national and/or occupational regulations and/or restrictions that may be in place such as compulsory LOs, concrete timelines/duration of apprenticeships, etc). The facilitator needs to be aware of these regulations and restrictions and provide clear guidance during this session. This also means the prototype can become more or less detailed.

Phase 4: Prototype

The facilitator gives a short presentation on this phase of the design thinking approach, what is meant by Prototype and how does it build on the ideate phase.

Slide 11 – Prototype

Phase 4: Prototype

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Build real, tangible sample version of a final product (e.g. a placement lesson plan) to address some of the ideas selected from the brainstorming phase.

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Group Exercise - Create an apprenticeship map

The facilitator provides the participants with the collection of ideas on post it notes that got through the selection & marking under the previous phase. The facilitator that asks the participants to create, as a group, an apprentice map linking 'learning outcomes' (i.e. 'what' and 'how') with 'learning activities' and try to bring them in a logical order of 'phases' of the apprenticeship. Where applicable, the phases of the apprenticeship should be based on concrete time periods for an apprenticeship in the specific country and occupational profile (in weeks or months). Participants can add activities to LOs and vice versa if they're not available on the collection of post its.

Group exercise
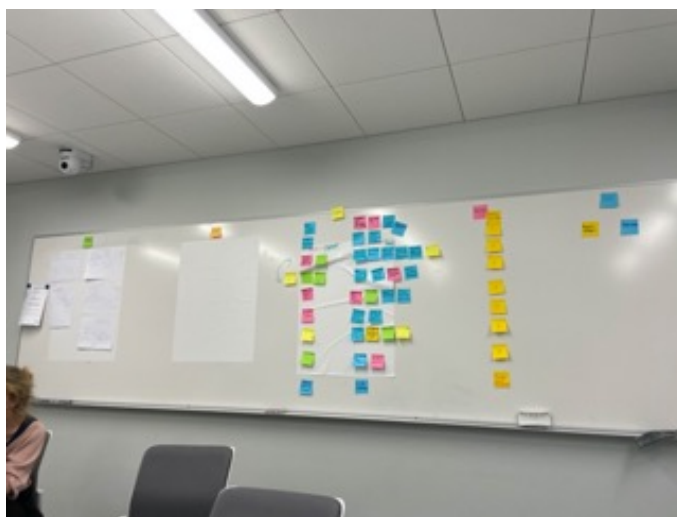
Depending on how pro-active the group is, this activity may need some guidance from the facilitator throughout, including in stimulating discussion within the group when necessary to keep everyone involved but for example also in grouping similar ideas together and in helping to connect the two categories.

Once the 'learning outcomes' and 'learning activities' are organised in a logical way, the facilitator checks that everyone the group agrees with it.
The facilitator then asks the participants to write down 1 element that they believe is still missing + 1 element that needs changing.

The facilitator will then lead a plenary discussion of these individual ideas for improvement, aiming for consensus decisions on these.

At this 'finalisation stage', the facilitator further summarises and adds and/or re-arranges the apprenticeship map where appropriate.

Slide 12: Prototype Model Placement
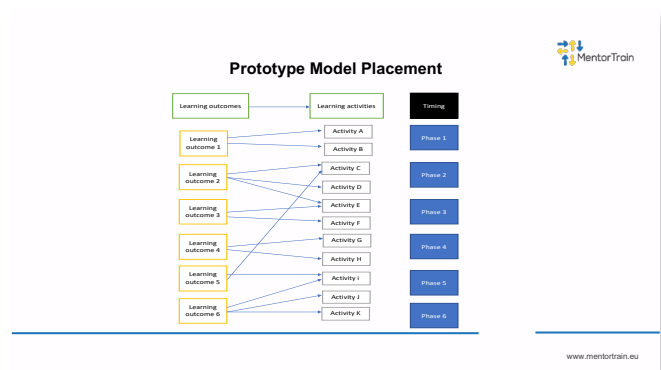
Conclusions/next steps

As a conclusion, the facilitator should clarify that a 'paper prototype' of a model placement in occupational subject X is the final output of this workshop but that a final model apprenticeship can only be finalised after further consultation with other stakeholders (especially PHE institutions/supervisors) and extensive testing in practice.

Depending on the national and institutional context of the workshop, the facilitator might outline more concrete actual follow-up activities that may be undertaken outside the scope of the MentorTrain project.

The facilitator may also inform the participants of the further outputs of the Mentor-Train projects and direct them towards the project website, upcoming publications, Multiplier Events, etc.

Evaluation of the workshop

For the benefit of learning and improvement of the workshop format, the facilitator should reserve a few minutes at the end of the workshop to get feedback from the participants. Depending on how much time is left/how eager participants are to leave, the facilitator has to decide what's the best way to undertake this feedback session.

Two possible ways could be:

1. Take about 5 minutes for an open discussion about how the workshop went, what the participants gained from it, what was good/useful, what needs improvement, etc.
2. Hand out 6 post-it notes to each participant and as them to write down 3 positive points about the workshop and 3 points that weren't so good/need improvement which they can stick on a ':)' and '.(' sheet on the wall before they leave.