Design Thinking

In the University of Humanities and Economics in Lodz (AHE), Elżbieta Dul-Ledwosińska has been using the Design Thinking approach running various courses on different subjects. The really fine thing about Design Thinking methodology is, that after recognising your group's ongoing problem, you can design an instant solution while learning and having fun at the same time.

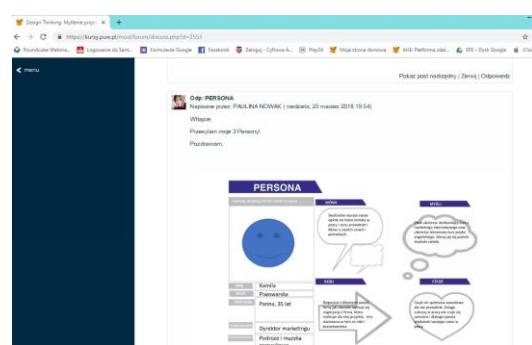Here are the steps Elżbieta takes with the class in applying this approach:

1. First she asks a group to define a problem they are willing to solve or a solution to be developed. (Usually they work on individual projects, but you can also use the methodology with a group of co-workers in order to improve the situation within the institution.) This takes about 15 minutes
2. Elżbieta asks them to carry out research on how this problem has been tackled so far. (They discuss it in the group, browse the Internet, ask people and share what they found out). It's up to you, how much time you want to give them on that. It can be 30 minutes including a discussion within the group.
3. The next step she wants them to carry out is to empathise with their clients (people for whom the solution is being developed): to get to know their needs, goals, dreams. She asks them to be good observers, to notice unspoken wishes too and write them down. (They have to really talk with a real, living person. Empathy map and persona card are the necessary tools here.) A solution designed without empathising with a client/user may be quite brilliant - but at the same time be a waste of time, because nobody wants it.
4. Now it's time to brainstorm ideas for possible solutions without excluding anything, a creative session that includes the possible and the impossible. Have fun with that! Elżbieta asks students to come up with some solutions.
5. In step 5 participants decide on one solution and make a prototype. Elżbieta asks them to draw, build, create a prototype for everybody to confront, try, discuss and challenge. The more make-shift the prototype, the better.
6. She asks participants to test the solution, improve it, test again, improve and so on. In this part you may only hear from them about a further story, after they go and use it in their environment.

Here you have examples of how differently students were answering to the tasks and what tools and devices we, academics can use, as they are only the means to obtain the expected outcomes. The commonly presented visual materials regarding Design Thinking methodology are of high design standards, which may discourage people from using this approach, as they are not able to produce such materials themselves.

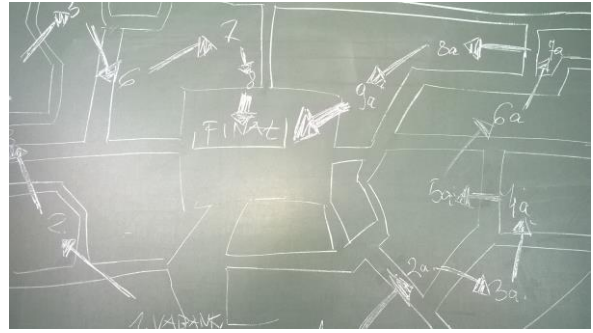|	
Design Thinking in Business open online platform course which was run with 11 students. The problem: I**mproving relations with clients** After working according to Elżbieta's instruction a student submitted filled in and analysed persona cards on the e-learning platform with her conclusions about the clients . Made remotely, at home, on the screen, with the computer program. This is as example for step 3, empathising.	
Visual communication, Culture study faculty The problem: **Idea and structure of a culture event in the space of the city** This is illustration for step 4 – brainstorming, gathering ideas	

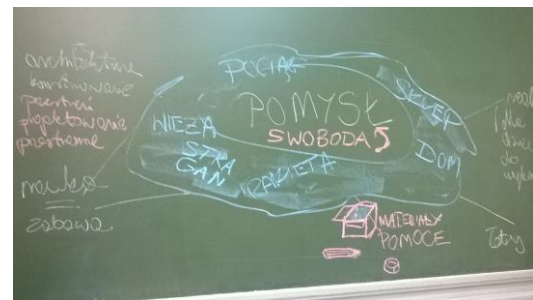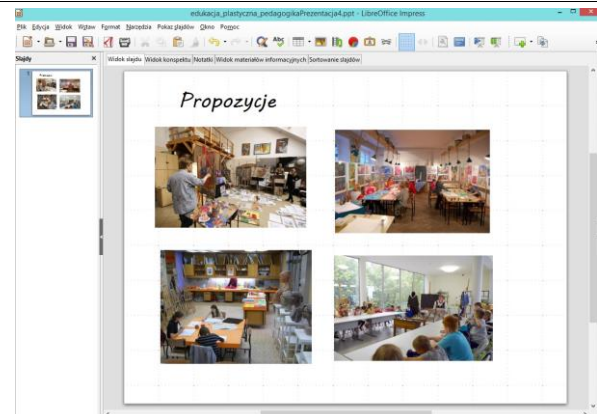|	
This is a prototype of the event (a map of the old city with the route and attractions/task points marked on it. Students were planning culture events. Made on a blackboard with a chalk. This is illustration for step 5 – prototyping	
Education through art methodology course, Pedagogy faculty . The problem: **Idea and content of a creative, innovative class** This is illustration for step 4 – brainstorming, gathering ideas	
This is a prototype of the content. Some ideas has been written, colours marking the category or importance. As you can see not every person is handy with drawing tools and willing to visualise but even though a colourful, nice image was created helping to organise future elaboration. Made on a blackboard with a colour chalk. This is illustration for step 5 – prototyping	
Teachers, postgraduate study participants, were designing solutions on: **how to reorganise, adjust learning spaces** at their schools to make users: students, teachers and parents happy. They were doing a research together, looking at different interiors. This is illustration for step 2 - researching	
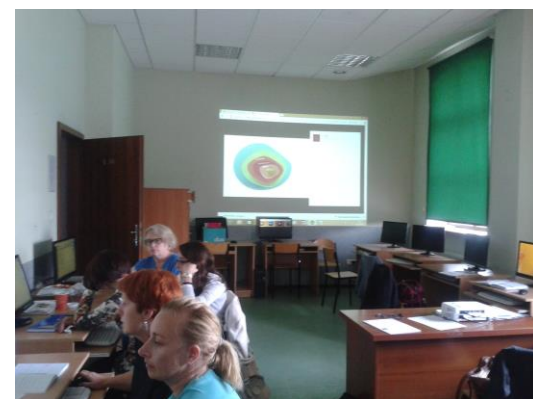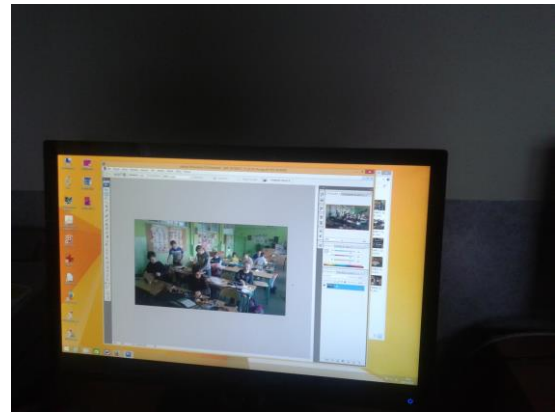
This is illustration for step 2 - researching	
After analysing many different learning spaces a brainstorming generates some ideas This is illustration for step 4 – brainstorming, gathering ideas	
A makeshift prototype was done with the use of simple programs, ready-made images from the Internet resources on the computer screen, during the class. *As this material was never to be published, some of the images may hold copyrights.* This is illustration for step 5 – prototyping	