



PHASE 1: UNDERSTANDING

To be able to solve a problem for someone, we have to fully understand their challenges. It is important to keep in mind that the people we want to design for often don't know how to define their problems themselves. Once you have a good understanding of what drives your users, you'll much more effectively generate ideas.

What is this phase about?

The first phase is about creating a common understanding about the challenge in your team. This might include sharing personal associations, stories and definitions as well as a basic desktop research and a first brainstorming about the subject. This phase is the starting point for opening up the mind for the challenge.

Why is this phase important?

This first phase of the process is important because it sets a common understanding as well as a point of departure for the team. By analysing the challenge together, the team will share their assumptions and discover first directions, which is necessary to reach a common understanding and prepare further research. The Understand phase also helps to nail down the challenge. By looking closely at the challenge, teams will often find themselves rephrasing it.

What is required for this phase?

- The whole team
- Whiteboard/ brown paper
- Sticky notes
- Pens
- Computer/ library/ expert literature

At the end of this phase, these questions should be considered in the team:

- What is our common understanding of the challenge?
- Who might be stakeholders?
- What might be fields to discover around the subject?
- What might be analogies? How do they work?

Suggested Methods

Self-reflection

Everyone in the team should take a moment to get into the subject all by her-/himself. This method can be held as a silent brainstorming in the group: Set a time timer to 5-15 Minutes and let everyone in the team brainstorm about the subject silently. Share in the team afterwards.



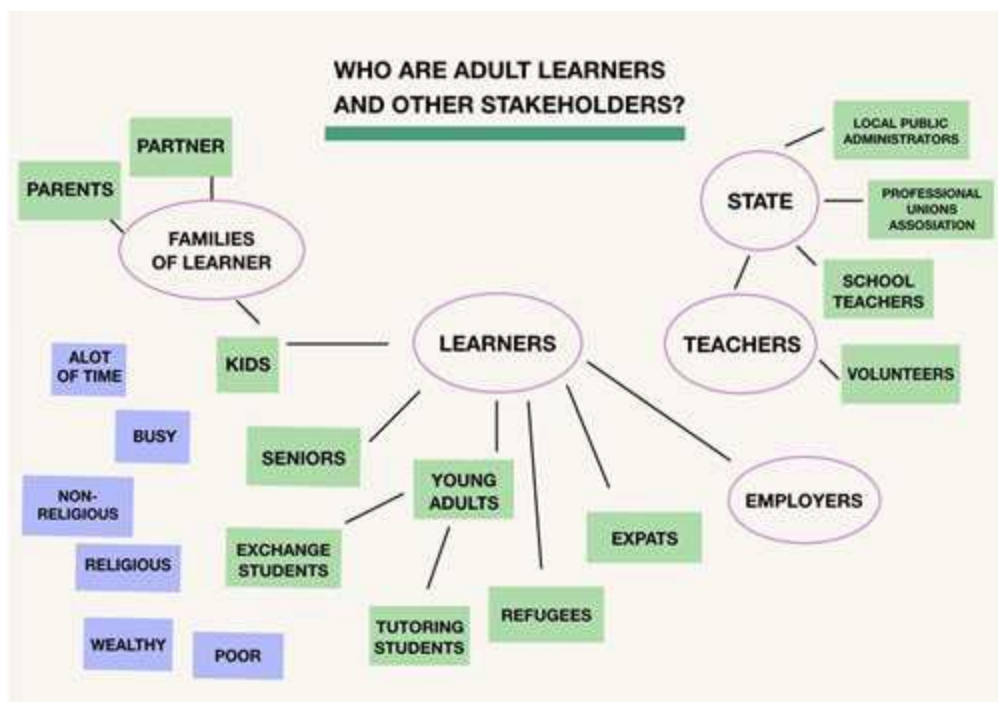
Self-reflection can also be set as a homework in advance of the project. Formulate questions about the challenge/ subject and let everyone in the team prepare them for the first meeting. For example:

- When were you a learner yourself the last time?
- Did you ever drop out of a course? Why?
- Describe your best day at school? What do you remember?

Mind Mapping

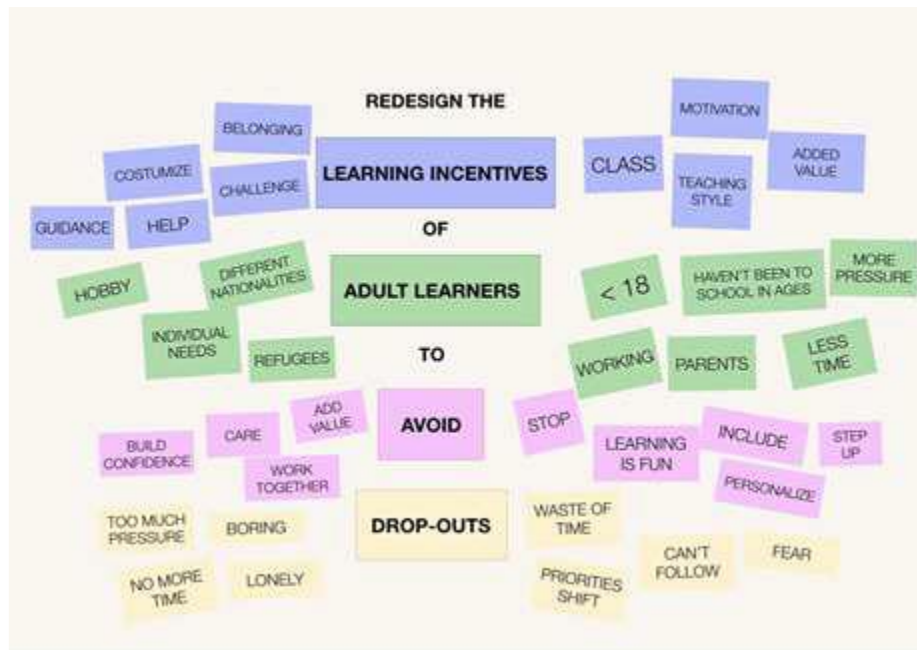
Through this method the team is enabled to link thoughts and first knowledge and to put everything that floats in the air into context. Through visualizing the data, the team will have a first overview on what they know and what they don't know about the subject. This will help getting directions for the research.

It is helpful to formulate a headline for your mind map. For example: Who are adult learners and other stakeholders?



Semantic Analysis

The Semantic Analysis is a useful method to create a common understanding about the challenge in the team. By collecting different definitions and assumptions of every team member the team will open up about the subject. It is important to share anything that comes into our minds at this stage. There is no right and no wrong.



Reference:

<https://ecologic.mk/d-thinking-manual/>