Design Thinking workshop

Be an Entrepreneur

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Design Thinking Workshop

In a collaborative effort to introduce students to innovative problem-solving methodologies, **STEP**, along with IQAC Miranda House, National Education Trust, MSME, organized a Design Thinking Workshop on November 11, 2024. This hands-on, interactive session was aimed at providing students with an introduction to Design Thinking—a structured approach that emphasizes creativity, empathy, and teamwork in problem-solving. The workshop had active participation from 25 students of Miranda House, across different years of study.

Overview of Design Thinking: It is an innovative approach that focuses on understanding users' needs, generating a broad range of ideas, and creating solutions that are user-centered. The process is grounded in five key principles:

- Empathise: Step into the user's shoes to understand their needs and perspectives.
- Define: Observe and analyse the situation, identifying core issues that need addressing. This leads to a problem statement guiding the next phases.
- Ideate: Encourage creative and diverse ideas, generating as many solutions as possible.
- Prototype: Experiment with solutions to identify the most effective ones.
- Test: Evaluate the prototypes, iterating as needed based on feedback.

Workshop Structure and Activities

The workshop began with an engaging ice-breaker activity designed to help students get comfortable with each other. For all students, this was their first time experiencing a structured Design Thinking workshop, and they showed a lot of enthusiasm. Divided into five groups, each group member had defined roles including the team leader, speaker(s), note-keeper(s), presenter(s), and time-keeper.

The workshop consisted of 3 main parts:
Problem identification, Solution generation & Implementation.

Part 1: Problem Identification

Each group was tasked with identifying a problem that they felt passionate about solving. Interestingly, the problems identified were predominantly service-based, with only one group focusing on a product. The identified problems were:

- Body dysmorphia and its impact on mental health
- Nutritious and hygienic food options for students living in paying guest (PG) accommodations
- Customized hair care products for children and young adults
- Ways to prevent exposure to inappropriate content on social media, for minors
- Providing better and improved services to students staying in PGs

Part 2: Solution Generation

In this stage, the teams brainstormed possible solutions to their identified problems. The ideas generated included:

- **Service-Based Solutions:** The service-focused teams proposed app-based solutions to address issues like nutritious food access and content control on social media. They recognized the importance of primary and secondary research to better understand their target audience and refine their app designs.

- **Product-Based Solution:** Only one group amongst the five came up with product based solution for hair care that aimed to design products tailored to individual hair types and preferences, while recognizing the market potential for personalized hair care.

Part 3: Implementation

Each team outlined actionable steps and timelines for developing their ideas. This exercise encouraged students to think practically about availability and access to resources, time, and investment requirements for implementing their solutions. The app-based teams planned phases like research, design, and testing, while the product team focused on prototyping and gathering user feedback. These steps highlighted the importance of process planning, organization, and adaptability.

Funding

Funding was an essential and practical component introduced towards the end of the workshop. STEP team brainstormed with each team on potential funding sources to support their projects and keep them sustainable in the long run.

Presentation and Feedback

After working through the stages of Design Thinking—problem identification, solution development, implementation, and funding—each group presented their projects.

This segment was designed to mimic real-world project pitching, helping students gain invaluable experience in effectively communicating their ideas to an audience. Each team summarized their work, navigating through the different stages of Design Thinking - starting from identifying a problem to proposing a viable solution, timeline, and funding plan.

After each presentation, students responded to questions from mentors and the audience on aspects like feasibility, challenges, and long-term impact. This Q&A simulated real-world pitching, exposing them to the types of questions they might encounter from stakeholders or investors.

The feedback helped students refine their ideas and boosted their confidence, enhancing their communication and critical thinking skills.

Though all the ideas presented by the students were impressive, the topic of Body Dysmorphia and how to deal with it was unique. The concept was noted for it's strong user focus, relevance, and need for the idea among youth.

Snapshot of Ideas

SN	IDEA	PROBLEM	SOLUTION	STRENGTHS	SUGGESTIONS
1	**Body dysmorphia (B4U)**	Lack of awareness among young adults and youth about body dysmorphia leading to poor mental health.	A platform to create awareness through articles, blogs etc and ways to deal with it and provides access to coaches, therapists, yoga instructors etc.	• Team's conviction in the idea & good presentation skills. • The team effectively handled the Q&A with clarity and insight.	• A deeper market research to understand whether there is a need for one more mental health app. • Understand current solutions & revenue model on mental health
2	**Tiffin service for students**	PG students often struggle with poor-quality tiffin services, affecting their productivity and sense of comfort.	A kitchen run by underprivileged women, providing nutritious, hygienic, and affordable meals.	• The participants demonstrated strong teamwork. • They demonstrated social bent of mind where the idea not only supports students' well-being but also empowers women through income.	• The idea has the potential for commercialization. • However, more brainstorming is required around the business model to bring down infrastructure costs. • The team was also asked to think about logistics in supplying tiffins. • Choice of geography for pilot.
3	**Personalised hair care products**	Lack of hair care products catering to different types of hair.	Create shampoos & conditioners with a focus on personalized hair care, allowing users to select products based on specific preferences, ensuring a more effective and customized experience.	The strength of personalized shampoos and conditioners lies in their ability to cater directly to the unique needs of each customer.	• Unrealistic timelines. • Market research and competitor analysis to understand the scope of for yet another product in the market.
4	**Affordable accomodation for students**	Lack of information on affordable accommodations for outstation students.	Acquire land through an NGO, build and manage their own student accommodations, ensuring quality and affordability.	• Understanding of the problem; the core challenges students face, including affordability, living conditions and safety.	• Building an infrastructure is high investment. It was suggested to rethink the idea & understand aggregation models. • A deeper understanding of market is required. Primary research is key to build an effective model (for e.g., interviewing students, understanding challenges they are facing in the existing homestays, PG's etc.)
5	**Social media content filtering**	Children and teenagers watching unwanted content on social media	An app that filters content on social media, ensuring children and teenagers are only exposed to safe and appropriate material.	• Presentation skills were good. • They had a fair idea about the features of the app which added relevance to the solution.	• Building an app is expensive. • Installing another app on the phone to control other apps may not cater to or generate the the requisite market demand. • Timelines were not realistic as it is difficult to build an app and make it market ready in 2 months.

Conclusion

The Design Thinking Workshop offered students a hands-on introduction to creative problem-solving, teamwork, and structured project development. By following each stage of the Design Thinking process, students gained skills in empathy, collaborative thinking, and solution-building. The workshop's interactive format allowed students to actively engage in brainstorming, ideating, and presenting their ideas, making the experience practical and memorable.
The focus on implementation provided insights into how ideas transitions into actionable projects, while the presentation and feedback session taught students the essentials of pitching and responding to constructive feedback. Students expressed enthusiasm for the workshop, noting that it helped them understand design thinking in an accessible yet impactful way.

With mentorship some of these ideas have the potential to be converted into commercial startups.

Special Thanks

To **Dr. Bijayalaxmi Nanda, Principal of Miranda House,** for her support, **Dr. Saloni Bahri (IQAC)** for coordinating, and the mentors **Prof. Dr. Hena Oak, Dr. Simranjit, Ms. Manavi Jain, Dr. Sonam Singh,** and **Dr. Sujata Sengupta** for co-ordinating with the students and encouraging them to attend this exciting and unique workshop. Overall, the workshop was a successful and enriching experience that equipped students with a practical framework for innovation and creativity in problem-solving.

BYTES from the Workshop

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It was actually a very well articulated workshop giving me a great experience and also allowing me to think not only about the problem but the solution as well.
I never thought of a being entrepreneur but this workshop encouraged me to think in that direction as well .

Thank you for organizing such an informative workshop for us .

Ayushi Chauhun
B.A.Economics(H)

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The Step design thinking workshop was really good! The mentors were super nice and helpful. They liked our ideas and gave us great advice on how to make them even better. The workshop taught us to think carefully and creatively. We learned a lot about starting our own business and working together as a team.

Aadya Agarwal
B.Sc. (Hons.) Mathematics - 2nd year

Glimpses