

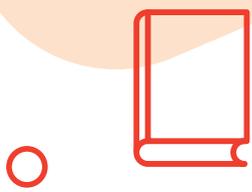


# \* STARTUP

# FOR GOOD



Learning Kit  
for Responsible  
and Innovative  
Entrepreneurship







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## Learning Kit for Responsible and Innovative Entrepreneurship

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# Introduction

In a rapidly changing world characterised by global challenges such as climate change, inequality and digital transformation, young people are faced with the task of effecting positive change. The Social Innovation Toolkit is designed to provide students, teachers and aspiring entrepreneurs with the knowledge, tools and mindset required to address these issues through innovative, responsible and impactful business practices.

This toolkit is primarily intended for teachers working with practice enterprises—simulated businesses in vocational education that help students learn by doing. It can also be used in classrooms and through self-study to support entrepreneurial learning with a social purpose. The toolkit is structured into **four chapters**, each offering a perspective on how to integrate social innovation into entrepreneurial education:

1. ***Understanding Social Challenges***: This chapter introduces students to key societal and environmental problems. It encourages them to explore root causes, reflect on values, and understand the systems that create inequality or harm.
2. ***Social Innovation Vocabulary***: This section explains essential concepts and terms used in social innovation. It helps students build a common language around purpose-driven entrepreneurship and understand what it means to create impact.

- 3. *Business Idea Generation for Social Practice Enterprises:*** Focused on idea development, this chapter provides practical tools and exercises to help students create meaningful business ideas that address real-world challenges through their practice enterprises.
- 4. *Innovative Learning Methods:*** Aimed at teachers, this final chapter presents creative and participatory teaching methods that foster student engagement, critical thinking, and a mindset for social change.

This toolkit introduces the **concept of social innovation**, in which entrepreneurship extends beyond profit to solve real problems and create sustainable solutions. Through a combination of theory, real-world examples and practical exercises, the toolkit promotes a deeper understanding of the complex social and environmental issues affecting local and global communities. It encourages students to explore root causes, reflect on values, and develop business ideas that contribute to a fairer, more inclusive, and more resilient society. These resources help students to become changemakers, whether in the classroom, in practice enterprises, or through self-study. They grow into individuals who recognise urgent issues, mobilise resources and launch initiatives for the greater good.

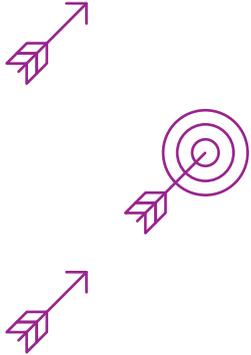
By linking entrepreneurial thinking with the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), the Social Innovation Toolkit provides a roadmap for setting up meaningful businesses that are both economically viable and socially responsible. On this journey, students acquire entrepreneurial skills and develop important prerequisites for shaping the future with courage and compassion, such as empathy, critical thinking and determination.



1.

# Understanding social challenges





This chapter explains what social challenges are, why they matter, and how they can become starting points for innovative and meaningful business ideas. It encourages students to look beyond individual hardships and explore the larger systems that create and sustain inequality, exclusion, and environmental harm. In a world where traditional models are being challenged, this chapter invites students to see themselves as part of the change. By recognising the challenges around them, they can begin designing businesses that do more than just sell a product. They can create solutions that matter.

## 1.1 What are social challenges?

Social challenges are complex and interconnected problems that affect the well-being, stability, and development of communities, societies, or entire populations. These challenges arise from a mix of **economic, political, environmental, and cultural factors**, and their impact can vary depending on historical background, social context, and geographic location. Examples include **inequality in access to education and healthcare, poverty, unemployment, gender inequalities, and climate change and environmental degradation**.

Unlike individual difficulties, social challenges impact **larger groups of people** and often require **collective action and long-term solutions**. Because they are often **multifaceted**, social challenges cannot be solved by a single organisation or sector alone. Effective solutions require **collaboration between governments, businesses, civil society, and individuals**.

For example:

1. **Poverty** is not only about a lack of income. It is also connected to limited access to education, healthcare, employment opportunities, and social services.
2. **Gender inequality** goes beyond unequal pay. It is shaped by cultural norms, political systems, and structural barriers that affect women's participation in society and leadership roles.
3. **Youth unemployment** is not just about a lack of available jobs. It is linked to limited access to quality education and skills training, a mismatch between education systems and labour market needs, and barriers such as discrimination or lack of work experience that prevent young people from entering the workforce.
4. **Climate change** is not only an environmental issue. It is also a social and economic challenge, connected to patterns of industrial production, consumer behaviour, unequal resource distribution, and the vulnerability of low-income communities who are often the most affected.

While no single business can solve a social challenge alone, **businesses—regardless of size or sector—have the power to make a real difference**. They employ people, shape consumer behaviour, develop innovative solutions, and influence public discourse and policymaking. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a **crucial role** in the economic development of both developed and developing countries. In **developing economies**, SMEs account for approximately **90% of all businesses** and contribute to about **50% of employment**. Their contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in these regions can reach up to **40%** (Faye and Goldblum, 2022). In **developed economies**, SMEs represent over **90% of the business population**, provide **60-70% of employment**, and contribute about **55% of GDP** (International Federation of Accountants, 2019).

In addition, **consumer expectations are changing**. Deloitte's 2024 Global Gen Z and Millennial Survey found that younger generations are increasingly choosing to support companies that reflect their values. Around six in ten Gen Zs and millennials believe that businesses have the potential to make a meaningful impact on various social challenges. Leading areas where they expect this influence include **environmental protection**, with **65% of Gen Zs and 68% of millennials** identifying it as a priority, and the **ethical use of emerging technologies like generative AI**, cited by **65%** of both groups. Additionally, **63%** of respondents believe that businesses can play a significant role in advancing **social equality** (Deloitte, 2025).

These statistics show that **social and environmental responsibility is not just a moral expectation—it is also a competitive advantage**. Consumers are actively rewarding companies that take sustainability and ethical values seriously. For businesses, this means that addressing social challenges is not only the right thing to do—it is also a **strategic opportunity** for innovation, customer loyalty, and long-term success.

## Local vs. global social challenges: what do they mean?

Social challenges can appear at both **local** and **global** levels, and their impacts vary depending on geographical, economic, and social contexts. Understanding the scale at which these issues occur helps businesses **develop appropriate responses** and tailor their actions to the needs of their community or the world.

### Social challenges on a local level

Local social challenges are issues that mostly affect a specific **city, region, or country**. These problems often arise from local economic conditions, policies, or social structures. Solutions typically involve action from **local governments, businesses, and community organisations**.

Examples of local social challenges:

- **Unequal access to quality education:** Some schools may lack funding, up-to-date learning materials, or trained teachers, leading to unequal learning opportunities between communities.
- **High unemployment rates:** Certain areas may face job shortages due to economic decline, lack of local industries, or a mismatch between available skills and jobs.
- **Pollution and waste management challenges:** Towns and cities often struggle with air pollution, poor waste disposal, and limited sanitation services, all of which affect public health.
- **Affordable housing shortages:** In growing cities, rising living costs and limited housing options can lead to homelessness.

Solutions at the local level often include **municipal policies**, **business-led initiatives**, and **community-driven efforts**. For example, a local business might start a job training programme for young people, or a city council could invest in sustainable housing and better public transport. Another example that illustrates how addressing a social challenge is a collaborative effort is a newly established start-up for bike sharing that aims to reduce air pollution by providing a more sustainable and affordable transport in the city, that can participate in urban planning with the city council to provide healthier living conditions for residents.

## Social challenges on a global level

Global social challenges are problems that go beyond national borders and affect **multiple countries or the entire world**. These challenges demand **international cooperation**, shared resources, and broad solutions involving governments, multinational organisations, global corporations, and even small businesses that commit to responsible and sustainable practices. While global social challenges often involve large-scale actors, **small businesses can also contribute in meaningful ways**, especially through local innovation, ethical practices, and collaboration.

Examples of global social challenges:

- ***Climate change and environmental degradation***: Rising global temperatures, deforestation, and pollution impact ecosystems, agriculture, and human health worldwide.
- ***Discrimination and lack of equal opportunities***: Across the world, people face systemic barriers based on gender, race, disability, or income that limit fair access to employment, leadership roles, and justice.
- ***Migration and refugee crises***: War, climate disasters, and political instability force millions to flee their homes in search of safety and better lives.
- ***Pandemics and public health crises***: Diseases like COVID-19 affect all countries and require global collaboration to protect public health and ensure fair access to treatment.

Responding to global challenges involves **international agreements**, **corporate responsibility across borders**, and **large-scale innovation**. For example, companies can reduce their environmental footprint by using sustainable supply chains. At the same time, international organisations like the United Nations work to reduce poverty and promote equality through global policies and funding.

## How are local and global social challenges interconnected?

Local and global social challenges do not exist in isolation—they often influence and reinforce each other and are deeply connected. What happens in one place can have ripple effects across borders, and global trends shape the realities of local communities. Understanding these connections helps us see that solving problems at one level can support change at another.

For example:

- **Climate change** is a global issue, but its effects like droughts, floods, and rising food prices are felt locally and can disrupt local economies, health systems, and infrastructure.
- **Global economic policies** or market fluctuations can impact local job markets, especially in countries that rely heavily on exports, tourism, or foreign investment.
- **Local conflicts or environmental disasters** can lead to international migration and refugee movements, creating global humanitarian challenges.
- **Local challenges like lack of access to education or healthcare** can have global implications when they contribute to wider patterns of inequality, migration, or instability.

**Local actions**, such as community recycling programmes or inclusive hiring practices, **can support progress on global goals**, including sustainability, equality, and economic development. For instance, a small business adopting sustainable packaging helps reduce global plastic pollution. A school promoting gender equality contributes to international goals for inclusive education and fair opportunity. Recognising these interconnections encourages students and entrepreneurs to think more holistically: **no action is too small to be part of a larger change and can contribute to systemic change.**

## Understanding root causes vs. symptoms of social challenges

When addressing social challenges, it is important to distinguish between root causes of the problem and its symptoms, which enables entrepreneurs to design more effective and responsible business solutions that contribute to lasting change.

**Symptoms** are the visible or immediate effects of a deeper issue. They are often the most noticeable aspects of a problem, but they do not explain why the problem exists. Addressing symptoms may offer temporary relief, but without understanding the underlying causes, the issue is likely to persist or re-emerge.

Examples of symptoms:

- **High unemployment rates:** Joblessness may be the visible problem, but it could be caused by limited access to education or training, economic downturns, or systemic discrimination in hiring.
- **Gender wage gap:** The difference in earnings between men and women is a symptom. The root causes may include gender bias, unequal access to leadership roles, and societal expectations around gender.
- **Homelessness:** Individuals without housing are the symptom, but contributing factors might include unaffordable housing, unemployment, mental health challenges, and lack of support services.
- **Poor academic performance:** Students struggling at school may be experiencing the effects of poverty, limited educational resources, or stress and mental health challenges.

**Root causes** are the deeper, structural factors that create and sustain social challenges. They are often historical, economic, political, or cultural in nature. Addressing root causes requires a more comprehensive and long-term approach, but it is key to achieving meaningful impact.

Examples of root causes:

- **Lack of access to quality education** → Leads to higher unemployment, poverty, and limited social mobility.
- **Discriminatory societal norms and policies** → Contribute to inequality, exclusion, and limited opportunities for marginalised groups.
- **Environmental degradation and unsustainable consumption** → Result in climate change, pollution, and loss of biodiversity.
- **Weak governance and economic instability** → Undermine job creation, public services, and fair access to opportunities.

## Sustainable solutions

Understanding the difference between temporary fixes and long-term solutions is essential for anyone aiming to create meaningful social impact. Many responses to social challenges focus on the most visible problems—symptoms. While these actions can provide short-term help, sustainable solutions go deeper, addressing the root causes that create or perpetuate the problem. Identifying the root causes of a problem is therefore important and leads to more **sustainable and long-lasting change**.

Examples:

- **Providing food aid** supports people facing hunger in the short term, but **investing in education, job training, and social safety nets** can help people escape poverty for the long term.
- **Building more hospitals** may manage disease outbreaks, but **improving access to clean water, sanitation, and public health education** can prevent diseases from spreading in the first place.

## Why does understanding social challenges matter?

Understanding social challenges is essential for individuals, businesses, and society as a whole because these issues affect economic stability, social well-being, and the environment. By recognizing and analysing social challenges, individuals and organizations can contribute to meaningful change and create sustainable solutions that improve people's lives. Below are several key reasons why understanding social challenges is crucial:

1. **Equips students with critical thinking and problem-solving skills:** Understanding social challenges helps individuals develop critical thinking by encouraging them to analyse the root causes of issues rather than just their symptoms. By identifying how different factors, such as economic policies, cultural beliefs, or environmental changes, contribute to a problem, individuals can propose more effective and sustainable solutions.
2. **Encourages ethical and responsible decision-making:** Awareness of social challenges helps individuals and businesses make decisions that are socially responsible and ethical. Businesses, in particular, have the power to either contribute to or alleviate social challenges through their practices.

- 3. Stimulates innovation and entrepreneurship:** Many successful businesses have emerged from identifying and addressing social challenges. When individuals understand social problems, they can spot opportunities for innovation and create businesses that provide solutions. This is known as social entrepreneurship, where companies focus not only on profit but also on making a positive impact.
- 4. Promotes civic engagement and active participation in society:** When individuals understand the challenges that affect their communities and the world, they are more likely to become active citizens. This means they are more engaged in policy discussions, advocate for change, and participate in community initiatives.
- 5. Helps businesses build stronger customer and employee relationships:** Consumers today are more socially conscious than ever before. They prefer to support businesses that align with their values, such as sustainability, ethical labour practices, and diversity. Companies that understand social challenges and address them effectively gain customer trust, brand loyalty, and competitive advantages in the marketplace. Additionally, employees want to work for organizations that have a positive impact on society. Companies that prioritize corporate social responsibility (CSR) often attract and retain top talent because employees feel that their work contributes to something meaningful.

## 1.2 Key social challenges in today's world

To create business ideas that have real value, young entrepreneurs need to understand the key social challenges shaping the world today. This section introduces some of the most important challenges facing society today. Each one highlights how entrepreneurial thinking can respond to real problems, close gaps, and contribute to building a fairer, more inclusive, and more resilient future.



### **Reflection prompt: Spot the challenge, imagine the change**

*Think about your school, community, or country. Which of the challenges listed below do you see around you? • Who is most affected by it, and how? • What do you think is missing or could be done differently? • Can you think of a business idea that could help solve this problem? • Write down 1–2 social challenges that matter to you and why. You will return to these ideas later when developing your business concept.*

# Climate change and environmental degradation

Climate change refers to long-term changes in temperature, weather patterns, and natural ecosystems. It is mainly caused by human activities such as burning fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrial production. Alongside climate change, environmental degradation includes air and water pollution, loss of biodiversity, soil erosion, and the overuse of natural resources. These issues are not just about nature but they have serious social and economic consequences. People living in overcrowded or poorly built housing are more vulnerable to heatwaves or floods. Farmers may lose their crops to drought, and children may suffer from health problems due to air or water pollution. Climate change is not only an environmental problem but it is a human one.

## Causes of climate change and environmental degradation

These are the deeper, systemic drivers of environmental harm:

- **Burning fossil fuels:** Producing energy from coal, oil, and gas releases greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, which trap heat and cause global warming.
- **Deforestation and land use changes:** Clearing forests for farming or development destroys ecosystems and reduces nature's ability to absorb carbon emissions.
- **Unsustainable production and consumption:** Many products are made and used in ways that create waste, use too many resources, and harm the environment, especially single-use plastics and fast fashion.
- **Economic systems focused on growth at any cost:** Businesses and governments often prioritize short-term profit over long-term sustainability, encouraging overconsumption and environmental harm.

## Symptoms of climate change and environmental degradation

These are the effects that people often see or feel directly:

- **Extreme weather events:** More frequent and intense storms, heatwaves, floods, and droughts are damaging homes, schools, and infrastructure.
- **Health problems:** Poor air and water quality contribute to breathing issues, heart disease, and illness, especially for children, older people, and those in polluted areas.
- **Loss of income and jobs:** Farmers, fishers, and other workers who depend on natural resources face growing uncertainty as weather patterns shift.
- **Food and water insecurity:** Drought, soil damage, and contaminated water make it harder for communities to grow food or access clean drinking water.

## Entrepreneurship as a force for change

Entrepreneurs have a key role to play in protecting the environment and creating a more sustainable future. Businesses can lead by using clean energy, reducing waste, or choosing sustainable materials. Some entrepreneurs develop new technologies for recycling, clean transport, or eco-friendly packaging. Others create services that help communities adapt to climate change, such as green building solutions or urban farming. Whether through innovation or simple changes in how business is done, entrepreneurship can help reduce environmental harm and promote a greener, fairer economy.



### *Reflection prompt: Green it up, clean it up*

*What environmental problems can you identify in your area (e.g. waste, pollution, extreme weather)? • Who is most affected by these issues, and how? • Could a business idea help reduce environmental harm or promote sustainability in your community?*

## Inclusion and diversity

Inclusion means creating environments where everyone regardless of background, identity, or ability feels welcome, respected, and able to participate fully. Diversity refers to the many differences among people, such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, religion, and socio-economic background. Together, inclusion and diversity go beyond simple representation. They are about ensuring fairness, and giving everyone equal access to opportunities, whether in schools, workplaces, public services, or communities.

### **Causes of exclusion and lack of diversity**

These are the deeper reasons why exclusion continues to exist:

- **Structural discrimination:** Rules, systems, or policies that disadvantage certain groups, such as workplaces without accessibility for people with disabilities or school textbooks that only reflect one cultural perspective.
- **Cultural biases and stereotypes:** Social beliefs or attitudes that favour one group over another, often unintentionally, can affect hiring, teaching, media, and leadership opportunities.
- **Limited representation:** When diverse groups are not visible in leadership, media, or education, it sends the message that they do not belong or cannot succeed.

- **Lack of inclusive education or training:** Schools and workplaces may not teach about diversity or inclusion, leading to misunderstanding or unintentional exclusion.

### Symptoms of exclusion and lack of diversity

These are the signs that exclusion is present:

- **Underrepresentation:** Some groups, for example women, are rarely seen in senior roles, high-paying industries, politics, or academia.
- **Barriers to employment:** Qualified candidates may be unfairly overlooked due to unconscious bias or workplace cultures that are not inclusive.
- **Social isolation:** People may feel invisible or excluded from school clubs, community events, or social networks.
- **Unequal access to services:** Public services like healthcare, education, or transport may not be accessible or inclusive for everyone, especially those with disabilities or language needs.

## Entrepreneurship as a force for change

Entrepreneurs have the power to create more inclusive communities through the businesses they build. They can hire diverse teams, create accessible products, and offer services that reflect the needs of all people, not just the majority. Some entrepreneurs focus specifically on reducing barriers for marginalised groups, such as designing tech for people with disabilities, launching education platforms in multiple languages, or creating safe spaces for youth. Inclusion is not just a value but it is also an opportunity for innovation and positive impact.



### **Reflection prompt: Everyone at the table**

*Are there people or groups in your school or community who are often excluded or underrepresented? • What prevents them from having equal opportunities? • What kind of business could make your community more inclusive?*

## Economic inequality

Economic inequality means that resources such as income, wealth, and opportunities are not shared fairly between people or groups. Some people have access to good schools, stable jobs, healthcare, and savings, while others struggle to meet

basic needs or improve their situation, even if they work hard. These differences exist within countries between rich and poor communities and between countries, such as between wealthier and lower-income nations.

### Causes of economic inequality

These are the deeper reasons why economic inequality continues to exist:

- **Unequal access to quality education:** Children from low-income families may attend underfunded schools or have fewer learning resources, limiting their future opportunities.
- **Discrimination in jobs and pay:** People may be paid less or denied promotions because of their background, gender, or ethnicity.
- **Unfair labour conditions:** Many people work in jobs that do not pay enough to live on, especially in informal or unstable employment.
- **Lack of support for small businesses and entrepreneurs:** People with fewer resources often face more difficulty starting or growing a business due to limited access to loans or training.

### Symptoms of economic inequality

These are the effects that people often see or feel directly:

- **Poverty and poor living conditions:** Families may live in overcrowded housing, go without heating, or struggle to afford nutritious food.
- **Education gaps:** Students from lower-income households may lack school supplies, tutoring, or internet access for digital learning.
- **Unemployment or underemployment:** People may be unable to find work or may work in jobs that do not match their skills or education.
- **Limited access to financial services:** Low-income individuals may not have access to bank accounts, credit, or investment opportunities.

## Entrepreneurship as a force for change

Entrepreneurship can help reduce economic inequality by creating jobs, supporting local communities, and offering new opportunities to those who have been left out. Businesses can choose to pay fair wages, provide training, and support small suppliers. Social enterprises can focus on helping people gain skills, build savings, or start their own ventures. Entrepreneurs from underrepresented backgrounds can also lead by example by showing that with the right support, good ideas can come from anywhere.

**Reflection prompt: Fair starts for all**

*What signs of economic inequality do you see in your community (e.g. job insecurity, poverty, limited access to education)? • How does it affect young people or families near you? • Could a business idea help create fairer access to income, services, or opportunities?*

## Civic engagement

Civic engagement means people taking an active role in shaping their communities and societies. This includes voting, volunteering, joining youth groups or local councils, speaking out on important issues, or using digital platforms to influence decisions. Civic engagement is more than just participating in elections, it is about people feeling that their voices matter and that they can help solve problems or improve life for others. It is a key part of a healthy democracy. Civic engagement becomes a social issue when people are excluded from these processes or feel unable to participate. When too few people are engaged, it can lead to weaker democracies, unfair policies, and less accountability from those in power.

### Causes of weak civic engagement

These are the deeper reasons why weak civic engagement persists:

- **Lack of civic education:** Many people are not taught how to participate in democracy and why their voice matters, how public institutions work or how to get involved in decision-making.
- **Distrust in institutions or politics:** When people feel their voices are ignored or that corruption is widespread, they stop believing their participation makes a difference.
- **Economic insecurity:** People working multiple jobs or living in poverty may not have time or energy to get involved.
- **Limited access to information:** Without reliable news, internet access, or community platforms, it is more difficult to stay informed or join public discussions.

### Symptoms of weak civic engagement

These are the signs that weak civic engagement is present:

- **Low voter turnout:** Many people do not participate in elections, especially young people or marginalised communities.
- **Public apathy or disconnection:** Individuals may feel uninformed, powerless, or uninterested in local or national issues.

- **Lack of diverse representation in public decision-making:** Certain groups, such as women, may not be represented in political or leadership roles, leading to policies that do not reflect the diversity of society.
- **Fewer chances to influence change:** Without civic participation, important issues may go unaddressed, and democratic processes may become less inclusive and transparent.

## Entrepreneurship as a force for change

Entrepreneurs can support civic engagement by creating tools, spaces, and platforms that help people speak up, organise, and take action. Some businesses build apps that connect citizens to local leaders or help schools teach civic skills. Others focus on digital participation, especially for young people, offering online voting systems, feedback platforms, or awareness campaigns. With the rise of AI and social media, entrepreneurs must also help protect access to trusted information and reduce the spread of misinformation. Businesses that promote participation help make democracy stronger and fairer for all.



### **Reflection Prompt: Make your voice count**

*Do people your age feel like they can influence decisions in your school or community? • What keeps young people from being more active citizens? • Can you think of a business or platform that helps young people get involved or make their voices heard?*

## The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

To understand today's social challenges, it helps to see how they connect to a **global effort**. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of **17 global goals** adopted by the United Nations in 2015. They aim to build a **fairer, safer, and more sustainable world by 2030**. The SDGs address the world's most urgent challenges, such as ending poverty (Goal 1), achieving gender equality (Goal 5), ensuring quality education (Goal 4), promoting decent work and economic growth (Goal 8), and taking action on climate change (Goal 13) (United Nations, 2015). These goals recognise that social, economic, and environmental issues are interconnected, and that solving one problem often supports progress in another.

## Why the SDGs matter

The SDGs provide a shared roadmap for creating positive change. They apply to everyone, including governments, schools, businesses, communities, and individuals, and promote a sense of shared responsibility. By using the SDGs, people and organisations can align their local efforts with global priorities, making their actions more focused and impactful. They also promote values like fairness, cooperation, sustainability, and responsibility, which are essential for building a better future and for being a responsible entrepreneur.

## How the SDGs support learning

The SDGs are a powerful tool in education. They help students connect global issues to their own lives and communities. Teachers can use the SDGs across different subjects, such as citizenship, geography, business, or science, to encourage critical thinking, global awareness, and real-world problem solving. The SDGs are also a great starting point for **developing business ideas that make a difference**. Entrepreneurs can use the goals to **identify real needs, create innovative solutions**, and measure the **social or environmental impact** of their ideas. By aligning with the SDGs, student entrepreneurs become part of a global movement for positive change, while still building financially sustainable businesses.

For example:

- A business could address Goal 12 (responsible consumption) by offering reusable packaging or repairing old electronics.
- A social enterprise could tackle Goal 4 (education) by providing digital learning tools to under-resourced schools.
- A local business could contribute to Goal 8 (decent work) by creating fair, inclusive job opportunities in the community.



### **Reflection Prompt: Think global, start local**

*Which SDG do you feel most connected to, and why? • Can you see a link between that goal and something in your community? • How could your future business contribute to that goal while also being financially sustainable?*

## 1.3 Social entrepreneurship

Businesses have a powerful role to play in shaping the kind of society we live in. While their traditional goal has been to generate profit, businesses also influence how people work, what products are used, how natural resources are managed, and who gets access to opportunities. In a time of growing social and environmental challenges like poverty, inequality, climate change, and digital exclusion, **businesses have the potential to become key drivers of positive change.**

Social entrepreneurship refers to starting and running a business with the primary goal of solving a social or environmental problem while still being financially sustainable. Unlike charities, social enterprises generate revenue by selling products or services. Unlike traditional businesses, their success is measured not only in profits, but also in the **impact they create**. Social entrepreneurship is about recognising a gap or injustice, like a lack of access to education, underemployment in disadvantaged groups, or environmental damage, and designing a business that addresses that issue directly. The goal is not short-term aid, but long-term change.

Social enterprises vary widely in size and type. Some are small, community-based projects and others operate internationally. What they have in common is that they:

- **Start with a social mission** at the core of their business idea.
- Use **market-based strategies** to generate income.
- Reinvest some or all profits to support their impact.
- Focus on **scaling solutions**, not just products.

For example:

- A tech company might create affordable software for schools in rural areas.
- A fashion brand might use recycled materials and hire people from marginalised communities.
- A local food cooperative might improve access to healthy, affordable food while supporting small-scale farmers.

### Why social entrepreneurship matters

Social entrepreneurship offers a new way of doing business that **puts people and the planet at the centre**, while still recognising the need for financial strength and growth. This approach is especially relevant today, when:

- Governments alone cannot solve every social issue, and new, flexible solutions are needed.
- Communities need practical and sustainable responses, not just short-term aid.
- Young people are looking for meaningful careers that allow them to create change.
- Consumers are demanding more ethical and transparent business practices.

Social enterprises often fill gaps that the public and private sectors overlook. They also play a unique role in:

- Empowering marginalised communities by creating jobs and services tailored to local needs.
- Driving innovation where traditional business models have failed to deliver inclusive outcomes.
- Raising awareness and shaping public attitudes on important issues.
- Building cross-sector partnerships between education, civil society, government, and industry.

## A new role for the next generation of entrepreneurs

For students learning about entrepreneurship today, social entrepreneurship allows them to turn their **passion for change into practical solutions**. By starting with a real-world problem and designing a solution that works both socially and financially, student entrepreneurs can help reduce inequality, respond to climate challenges, improve education and inclusion and solve other social challenges through their entrepreneurial endeavours.

## A new way of measuring success: The Triple Bottom Line

In traditional business, success is often measured by how much profit the company makes. In social entrepreneurship, success is more holistic. It includes:

- **Profit:** The business must be financially viable to continue operating.
- **People:** It should improve the lives of individuals and communities.
- **Planet:** It should avoid harming the environment and aim to restore or protect it.

This is called the **triple bottom line: People, Planet, and Profit**. A business with this approach looks at its full impact, not just its financial performance.

Aspect	Traditional business	Social enterprise
Main goal	Profit	Social impact + financial sustainability
Success measured by	Revenue and growth	Impact + income
Business model	Competitive advantage	Triple bottom line
Use of profits	For owners/shareholders	Often invested into mission or community

## Responsible business practices

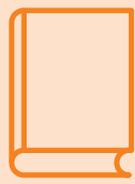
Not all businesses are social enterprises, but **any business can take steps to operate more responsibly and ethically**. Today, many traditional companies are recognising the value of integrating social and environmental responsibility into their operations. This can include:

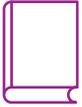
- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):** Voluntary actions businesses take to reduce negative impacts, like supporting education programmes, reducing carbon emissions, or improving supply chain transparency.
- **Sustainable innovation:** Designing products or services that meet customer needs while reducing harm, such as water-saving technologies or biodegradable packaging.
- **Inclusive employment practices:** Actively hiring and supporting people from different backgrounds, including those with disabilities, migrants, or people re-entering the job market.
- **Community engagement and investment:** Collaborating with local organisations or funding initiatives that improve education, health, or wellbeing in the surrounding area.



# 2.

## Social Innovation Vocabulary





Our world is changing – and with it, the demands placed on society, the economy and education. Issues such as sustainability, social justice and digital participation are becoming increasingly important. New ideas and approaches are needed to respond to these challenges: so-called social innovations. They combine entrepreneurial thinking with social responsibility and show how creativity and teamwork can bring about positive change. This chapter provides an overview of important terms related to social innovation – from social entrepreneurship and sustainable development to value-based organisations. The examples and methods presented are intended to encourage readers to address current social issues in a practical way in the practice enterprise or in theory in the classroom – and to work together to find solutions.

## 2.1 Changemaker

The term “changemaker” was coined by the social entrepreneurship organisation Ashoka to describe individuals who are committed to changing the world for the better.

A changemaker is someone who not only strives for change, but also actively initiates it by acquiring relevant knowledge and mobilising the necessary resources. It is important to note that changemakers do not just launch large or high profile initiatives—every meaningful contribution that has a positive impact on a community or the environment counts.

Regardless of whether the impact is large or small, every action that drives social progress is equally valuable, and everyone has the potential to become a changemaker.

**Examples**

When most people hear the term ‘changemaker’, they probably think of big names like Nelson Mandela or Mahatma Gandhi. However, there are also important changemakers in Germany and Slovakia:

Category	Germany: Felix Finkbeiner / Plant-for-the-Planet	Slovakia: Marek Mach / Youth Against Fascism (Mladí proti fašizmu)
<b>Brief description</b>	Felix Finkbeiner founded the initiative Plant-for-the-Planet at the age of 9 to combat climate change by planting trees worldwide.	Marek Mach founded the NGO Youth Against Fascism as a teenager to promote democracy, tolerance, and critical thinking among youth.
<b>Goal</b>	Raise awareness about the climate crisis and empower children to become climate changemakers through global tree-planting campaigns	Encourage young people to stand up against extremism and misinformation, and to promote democratic values and human rights
<b>Measures</b>	Global tree planting projects, climate academies for youth, advocacy at international conferences, partnerships with NGOs and businesses	Educational campaigns, online awareness platforms, school visits, and cooperation with media and civil society organisations
<b>Social impact</b>	Over 100,000,000 trees planted globally; children empowered as climate ambassadors; global movement for climate justice	Thousands of young people mobilised against extremism; influence on public discourse; increased civic engagement among youth
<b>Financing</b>	Donations, partnerships with corporations, climate certificates, and foundation support	Grants, crowdfunding, partnerships with NGOs and public funding
<b>SDGs</b>	13 (Climate Action), 15 (Life on Land), 4 (Quality Education), 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)	4 (Quality Education), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions)
<b>More info</b>	<a href="http://www.plant-for-the-planet.org">www.plant-for-the-planet.org</a>	<a href="http://www.mladiprotifasizmu.sk">www.mladiprotifasizmu.sk</a>

### *Ideas for using in practice enterprise*

Even in a practice enterprise, anyone can be a changemaker.

Participants are encouraged to take responsibility and initiate change – whether by optimising a process, suggesting a more environmentally friendly product, or organising social activities in the school environment.

It is not the extent of the change that matters, but the attitude behind it: actively shaping the future instead of simply going with the flow. In a very practical way, this promotes personal initiative, problem-solving skills, and entrepreneurial thinking.

To foster this mindset, trainers can regularly integrate short reflection phases or “Changemaker Challenges” into the workflow. For example, teams can be asked once a month to present a small improvement idea for the practice enterprise. The best ideas can be tested, implemented, and celebrated, creating a culture of participation and innovation.

## 2.2 Community

A community is a social network of people who are in contact with each other and influence each other – both emotionally and intellectually. Over a period of time, this creates a sense of belonging.

Typically, members of a community pursue a common goal, share similar values or have the same interests. The exchange and cooperation within the group strengthen cohesion and promote a sense of community.

In the context of responsible business, community refers to one or more local groups of people, organisations and ecosystems that are directly or indirectly affected by a company’s business operations, decisions and activities within a specific geographical area.

This encompasses not only immediate neighbours and local businesses, but also local institutions, cultural traditions, and the environment. A responsible business recognises the impact and interdependence between itself and the communities it serves, takes their needs into account, and ensures that its operations are conducted in a way that benefits and respects those communities.” Communities are a source of labour, expertise and unique perspectives for companies, which can be a source of inspiration and innovation for companies. When a company shows consideration for the community, this is reflected in a better corporate culture or more satisfied employees. Working with communities is beneficial for both sides, not just for the communities themselves – companies

can build an ethical brand and present themselves as responsible companies that take into account the principles of sustainability and equality.

Companies build partnerships with local communities by, for example, giving sponsorship gifts to representatives of communities or non-governmental organisations that solve local problems. They organise voluntary activities that strengthen relationships between the community, company leadership and employees.

They enter into strategic partnerships based on shared goals and involve the non-governmental sector, opinion leaders and public representatives with similar values in their activities. They work together with community representatives, consider their opinions and thereby gain new perspectives for solving current problems.

**Examples**

Category	Germany: dm-drogerie markt GmbH + Co. KG	Slovakia: IKEA Bratislava (IKEA Components s.r.o.)
<b>Brief description</b>	dm is a leading German retail company with a strong commitment to social responsibility and community involvement.	IKEA in Slovakia is known for its community outreach and environmental engagement, involving local stakeholders in its operations.
<b>Goal</b>	Foster social cohesion and strengthen local communities through education, culture, and sustainability initiatives	Support and empower local communities through partnership, inclusion, and sustainable local development
<b>Measures</b>	„HelferHerzen“ volunteer programme; partnerships with local NGOs; funding for educational and cultural initiatives	Community Days (volunteering), donation of furniture to shelters and schools; collaboration with NGOs (e.g. for inclusion or circular economy)
<b>Social impact</b>	Strengthening of civic engagement; increased support for marginalised groups; improved regional cohesion	Empowered local communities, promoted circular economy practices, supported vulnerable groups through practical donations and support
<b>Financing</b>	Self-funded through company profits; additional donations via customer campaigns	Financed by company CSR budget; in-kind donations and employee engagement programmes

<b>SDGs</b>	11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 4 (Quality Education), 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)	11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), 10 (Reduced Inequalities)
<b>More info</b>	<a href="http://www.dm.de">www.dm.de</a>	<a href="http://www.ikea.sk">www.ikea.sk</a> (see local community & sustainability section)

***Ideas for using in practice enterprise***

A practice enterprise may decide to source raw materials, products or services from local suppliers, craftsmen and artisans. This strengthens local businesses and the economy in the region and promotes economic prosperity. At the same time, it also reduces transport costs and their negative impact on the environment.

## 2.3 CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) refers to the voluntary commitment of companies to manage the social, environmental and economic impacts of their business activities responsibly. CSR encompasses the integration of social, environmental, ethical, human rights and consumer concerns into corporate strategy and operational processes – beyond compliance with legal requirements.

CSR follows the principle of sustainable development, which aims to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. Companies that practise CSR are committed to responsible and transparent corporate governance in their dealings with employees, business partners, the environment and society.

Key areas of action include:

- Respect for labour and human rights
- Environmental protection and resource conservation
- Fighting corruption
- Promoting fair trade
- Social and economic development along the entire supply chain – including in developing and emerging countries

CSR is company-led, which means that companies themselves take the initiative to implement responsible practices – in dialogue with stakeholders and as a contribution to a fair and sustainable economic system.

**Example**

Category	Germany: Weleda AG (Schwäbisch Gmünd)	Slovakia: Slovenské Elektrárne (Bratislava)
<b>Brief description</b>	Weleda is a globally active manufacturer of natural cosmetics and anthroposophical pharmaceuticals, committed to integrating CSR across environmental, social, and ethical dimensions.	Slovakia's largest energy provider, implementing CSR through sustainability and community support.
<b>Goal</b>	To align all business operations with the principles of sustainable development and social responsibility while promoting biodiversity, fair trade, and employee well-being	Ensure responsible energy production and support local communities and environmental protection
<b>Measures</b>	Climate-neutral production, biodynamic cultivation of raw materials, responsible sourcing in line with UEBT standards, social inclusion projects, employee welfare programmes, and stakeholder dialogues across the supply chain	Investments in renewables, safety training, educational campaigns, employee volunteering
<b>Social impact</b>	Improved working conditions in global supply chains, environmental regeneration, empowerment of small-scale producers, and strengthened community engagement through sustainability education and inclusion projects	Increased environmental awareness, youth education, and stronger local engagement
<b>Financing</b>	Self-financed through business revenue, with a fixed percentage reinvested in environmental and social initiatives	Financed by corporate profits and EU sustainability programmes

<b>SDGs</b>	3 (Good Health and Well-being), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), 13 (Climate Action), 15 (Life on Land)	7 (Clean energy), 13 (Climate action), 4 (Quality education), 11 (Sustainable communities)
<b>More info</b>	<a href="http://www.weleda.de/nachhaltigkeit">www.weleda.de/nachhaltigkeit</a>	<a href="http://www.seas.sk">www.seas.sk</a>

### *Ideas for using in practice enterprise*

Implementing corporate social responsibility (CSR) in a practice enterprise means that responsibility for social, ecological and ethical issues becomes an integral part of the entire business model and process.

This not only trains business skills, but also raises awareness of how business decisions can have positive (and negative) effects on the environment or society.

## 2.4 Non-governmental organisation (NGO)

A Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) is an independent, non-profit organisation that operates separately from governments and does not aim to generate profit. NGOs pursue social, humanitarian, environmental, or developmental goals based on private initiative and civil engagement. They often work internationally and are driven by values such as justice, equality, and sustainability.

NGOs are active in a wide range of fields, including:

- Human rights
- Development cooperation
- Humanitarian aid
- Environmental and animal protection
- Social justice and sustainable development

They raise public awareness, provide aid, and influence public discourse and policymaking. NGOs often collect donations, conduct research, and implement concrete projects, such as improving access to clean water, education, or healthcare.

NGOs play a key role in shaping political will by:

- Setting agendas through media outreach
- Advocating for policy change across national borders
- Representing marginalized voices and promoting civic participation

Although NGOs are not government entities, they often collaborate with public authorities, ministries, or international bodies to increase their impact.

Well-known international NGOs include Amnesty International (human rights), Greenpeace (environment), and Brot für die Welt or Misereor (development aid).

**NGO vs. Non-Profit Organisation:**

Both NGOs and non-profits do not aim to make a profit and are dedicated to serving the public good. However, NGOs usually operate on a national or international level and focus on encouraging political action. Non-profits may work more in one area and can be hired by the state to provide social services.

NGOs usually get their money from donations, grants, membership fees and sometimes public funding. Being open and honest is very important for their credibility and effectiveness.

**Examples**

Category	Germany: Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World)	Slovakia: Človek v ohrození (People in Need Slovakia)
Brief description	Brot für die Welt is a German non-governmental organisation (NGO) and an initiative of the Protestant churches. They are committed to global justice, peace and education, and to fighting hunger and poverty.	People in Need Slovakia is a humanitarian and development NGO supporting marginalised groups and crisis regions with social and educational aid.
Goal	Promote global justice, support sustainable development, and reduce poverty through international cooperation	Improve living conditions of vulnerable communities in Slovakia and abroad, focusing on education, inclusion, and human rights

<b>Measures</b>	Development projects in over 90 countries; advocacy on climate justice and fair trade; emergency aid; support for civil society	Educational programmes for Roma children; humanitarian aid in Ukraine; community projects in poor rural regions; media literacy workshops
<b>Social impact</b>	Strengthening civil society; improving health, education and food security in the global South; and raising political awareness in Germany	Increased social inclusion, education access and resilience in marginalised communities; promoted democratic values
<b>Financing</b>	Funded by church donations, private donors, and public development funds (e.g. BMZ)	Funded through state grants, EU programmes, private donations, and project-based funding
<b>SDGs</b>	1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 13 (Climate Action), 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions)	1 (No Poverty), 4 (Quality Education), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)
<b>More info</b>	<a href="http://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de">www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de</a>	<a href="http://www.clovekvohrozeni.sk">www.clovekvohrozeni.sk</a>

***Ideas for using in practice enterprise***

Like real companies, practice enterprises can also provide NGOs with direct (fictitious) funds through (fictitious) grants, sponsorship or donations.

Real companies allocate part of their budget or profits each year for this purpose or make use of the option to donate two per cent of their tax. This financial support can be crucial for the implementation of important projects and events that can have a positive impact on communities and the environment.

## 2.5 Social enterprise

A social enterprise, or social business, is an organisation that uses entrepreneurial methods to address social or environmental challenges. Unlike traditional businesses, its primary goal is not profit maximization, but the creation of measurable positive impact—often in areas such as poverty reduction, social inclusion, education, or environmental sustainability.

Social enterprises generate income by selling products or services but reinvest a significant portion of their profits to advance their social mission. This

distinguishes them from charities, which rely primarily on donations. Many social enterprises aim to improve the living conditions of disadvantaged or marginalized groups by offering employment opportunities or access to essential services.

In terms of employment strategy, they often focus on integrating individuals from at-risk communities into the workforce, thereby promoting long-term socio-economic participation. Funding typically comes from market-based activities, although some social enterprises also access grants or public support to scale their impact.

As seen in organisations like NeighborWorks America, social enterprises continually adapt their business models to remain financially sustainable while maximizing their contribution to society.

**Examples**

Category	Germany: discovering hands Service GmbH	Slovakia: Vagus o.z.
<b>Brief description</b>	Trains blind or visually impaired women as medical tactile examiners for early breast cancer detection	Social organisation supporting homeless people through day centres, outreach work, and a social café
<b>Goal</b>	Promote inclusion and improve healthcare	Support social reintegration and reduce poverty
<b>Measures</b>	Professional training, integration into healthcare system, awareness raising	Operation of day centres, street work, and the “Dobre&Dobré” café
<b>Social impact</b>	Employment for people with disabilities and enhanced early cancer detection	Jobs for marginalised groups and improved reintegration opportunities
<b>Financing</b>	Service income from healthcare providers; partly publicly funded	Revenue from café, social services, and donations
<b>SDGs</b>	3 (Good health), 5 (Gender equality), 10 (Reduced inequalities)	1 (No poverty), 10 (Reduced inequalities), 8 (Decent work)
<b>More info</b>	<a href="http://www.discovering-hands.de">www.discovering-hands.de</a>	<a href="http://www.vagus.sk">www.vagus.sk</a>

### *Ideas for using in practice enterprise*

In a practice enterprise, the concept of social enterprise can be used to explore how businesses can combine profit making with social responsibility.

Participants develop a business idea that not only sells a product or service but also solves a social or environmental problem (e.g. upcycled products, inclusive recruitment policies).

They simulate how profits are re-invested in social goals and learn to balance economic decisions with social impact. This promotes awareness of sustainable and inclusive business strategies.

## 2.6 Social entrepreneurship

Social Entrepreneurship refers to entrepreneurial activities that aim to develop innovative, pragmatic, and sustainable solutions to social problems. The core objective is not profit, but rather achieving meaningful, long-term improvements in society—so-called meta-economic upper goals. Individuals engaged in these activities are known as social entrepreneurs.

Typical fields of action for social entrepreneurs include:

- Education
- Environmental protection
- Job creation for disadvantaged groups (e.g., people with disabilities)
- Poverty alleviation
- Promotion of human rights

Because profit is not the primary objective, many social entrepreneurs work within **non-profit** structures or support alternative legal forms that allow them to reinvest in their mission.

The broader concept of the social economy encompasses both non-profit organisations and socially oriented market activities. In some countries, social enterprises or social entrepreneurs can register officially and may be granted special legal or tax status—though the recognition and treatment of such entities vary greatly from country to country.

Since the early 2000s, the term sustainable entrepreneurship has also been used to describe both social and ecological entrepreneurship. This approach involves combining multiple business goals—such as employment generation, innovation, education, and environmental sustainability—rather than focusing

solely on financial profit. More recently, areas such as cultural heritage preservation, the arts, sports, and recycling have also been included under this umbrella.

Efforts to measure the effectiveness of social enterprises—particularly through tools like social return on investment (SROI) or social impact assessments—are still in development, and standardized methodologies are not yet widely established.

**Examples**

Category	Germany: wellcome gGmbH	Slovakia: AfB Slovakia s.r.o.
<b>Brief description</b>	Social enterprise supporting young families after childbirth with voluntary help in everyday life	IT refurbishing company employing mainly people with disabilities while promoting environmental sustainability
<b>Goal</b>	Support families during stressful early stages to promote health, equality, and participation	Inclusion of people with disabilities through employment and reduction of electronic waste
<b>Measures</b>	Volunteer placement for child care Local support networks Digital services for family support	Collecting and refurbishing used IT hardware Sales to individuals/organisations >50% disabled staff Legal compliance for social enterprises
<b>Social impact</b>	Relief for parents in early family life Support for child development Prevention of parental isolation	Job creation for people with disabilities Reduced e-waste Awareness for sustainable IT use
<b>Financing</b>	Public funding, donations, foundations, and project-specific grants	Sales revenue, public/EU funding, full reinvestment of profits
<b>SDGs</b>	3 (Good health), 5 (Gender equality), 10 (Reduced inequalities)	8 (Decent work), 10 (Reduced inequalities), 12 (Responsible consumption)
<b>More info</b>	<a href="http://www.wellcome-online.de">www.wellcome-online.de</a>	<a href="http://www.afb-group.sk">www.afb-group.sk</a>

**Ideas for using in practice enterprise**

Social entrepreneurship can be implemented in a particularly practical way.

In the practice enterprise, participants develop a business idea that specifically addresses a social or environmental problem – such as a product made from recycled materials or a service for disadvantaged groups.

In the process, they learn how social innovation arises, how to plan for impact, and how economic stability and social benefit can go hand in hand.

The focus is on combining creativity, meaningfulness and entrepreneurial thinking.

## 2.7 Social impact, collective impact

Social impact describes the measurable change that occurs when targeted actions or initiatives effectively address a significant social issue. This impact results from intentional efforts designed to improve specific societal conditions and is often achieved through collaboration among multiple stakeholders working toward common goals.

For such collective initiatives to succeed, they require a shared vision, coordinated activities, consistent communication, and the use of common indicators to monitor and evaluate progress.

Closely related is the concept of social impact assessment—a process used to analyse and evaluate the actual outcomes of social innovation initiatives. Various tools and methodologies are applied to determine the extent to which these activities create meaningful and sustainable improvements in society.

**Examples**

Category	Germany: Lemonaid Beverages GmbH	Slovakia: Purefood s.r.o. (Powerlogy)
<b>Brief description</b>	Hamburg-based social enterprise producing Fairtrade beverages and funding development projects	Slovak company creating healthy food products, combining nutrition with social and environmental responsibility
<b>Goal</b>	Improve living conditions in disadvantaged regions via fair trade and local project support	Promote healthy eating and support education, especially on neurodiversity and nutrition

<b>Measures</b>	Sale of organic Fairtrade drinks; donations per product to projects; partnerships with cooperatives	Sale of functional foods; support through own fund; public campaigns and education initiatives
<b>Social impact</b>	€3+ million for projects in Africa, Asia, and Latin America; local income generation	Funding for youth with ADHD, school programmes; promotion of conscious nutrition
<b>Financing</b>	Product sales; donations to Lemonaid & ChariTea e.V.	Mainly product sales; additional donations and project funding
<b>SDGs</b>	1 (No Poverty), 3 (Good Health and Well-being), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production)	3 (Good Health and Well-being), 4 (Quality Education), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production)
<b>More info</b>	<a href="http://www.lemon-aid.de">www.lemon-aid.de</a>	<a href="http://www.powerlogy.com">www.powerlogy.com</a>

**Ideas for using in practice enterprise**

In the practice enterprise, participants can learn how to pursue social goals using entrepreneurial means. This includes, for example, planning a project to reduce waste or promote equal opportunities.

They consider how the desired social change can be measured (e.g. CO<sub>2</sub> savings, reach of awareness campaigns) and how multiple stakeholders can be mobilised to achieve a common goal.

This provides practical insight into what collective responsibility and impact mean.

## 2.8 Social innovation

Social innovation refers to the development and implementation of effective responses to complex and often systemic social and environmental challenges, with the goal of advancing social progress. It is not limited to any specific type of organisation or legal structure. Instead, successful solutions frequently emerge through active collaboration among stakeholders from government, business, and the non-profit sector.

Social innovations offer answers to key questions about the future – such as how we will live and work together in the future and how we can improve our social interaction.

They show ways in which we can overcome current challenges such as climate change and demographic change – i. e. an increasingly ageing society.

Promoting social innovation means putting ideas from all areas of society into practice in order to develop concrete solutions to the major challenges of our time.

At the same time, it means specifically strengthening cooperation and exchange between science, business, welfare, administration and civil society.

**Examples**

These examples illustrate how social innovations in Germany and Slovakia address societal challenges through cross-sectoral cooperation and creative use of resources.

Category	Germany: ProjectTogether	Slovakia: Nová Cvernovka
<b>Brief description</b>	Non-profit platform supporting scalable solutions to social challenges	Cultural and creative hub in a former factory supporting social innovation
<b>Goal</b>	Drive systemic change through cross-sector collaboration	Promote cultural, social and environmental innovation via community engagement
<b>Measures</b>	Programs like #WirVsVirus and #UpdateDeutschland; 2000+ social projects supported	Events, workshops, education, creative industry support
<b>Social impact</b>	Enabled civic participation and innovation; awarded by Schwab Foundation	Revitalized urban space; awarded by SozialMarie for social innovation
<b>Financing</b>	Public funding, private donations, foundations	Public funds, sponsorships, event revenue
<b>SDGs</b>	17 (Partnerships for the Goals), 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions)	11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 4 (Quality Education), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)
<b>More info</b>	<a href="http://www.projecttogether.org">www.projecttogether.org</a>	<a href="http://www.novacvernovka.eu">www.novacvernovka.eu</a>

### ***Ideas for using in practice enterprise***

Implementing social innovation in a practice enterprise means expanding the traditional framework of a practice enterprise and focusing on social challenges as central issues. For example:

- Project-based tasks with a social relevance (sustainability, environment, inclusion) that are geared towards how business processes can create not only economic but also social benefit.
- Encouraging people from different subject areas such as business, technology and the social sciences, to collaborate on business projects. This allows them to learn about different perspectives and how to combine different interests, which in turn helps them to come up with creative solutions.
- The practice enterprise seeks exchange with external partners (mentor companies).
- In addition to economic indicators, social and sustainability-related indicators should also be included in the evaluation of the practice enterprise's work.
- Culture of experimentation: An innovative practice enterprise thrives on its flexibility and willingness to try out unconventional approaches.

## **2.9 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

The 17 SDGs are integrated—acknowledging that action in one area affects outcomes in others, and that sustainable development must balance social, economic and environmental dimensions.

Countries have committed to prioritize progress for those who are furthest behind. The SDGs are designed to end poverty, hunger, AIDS, and discrimination against women and girls.

The creativity, knowhow, technology and financial resources from all of society is necessary to achieve the SDGs in every context.

## The 17 Goals:

1. **NO POVERTY:** End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
2. **ZERO HUNGER:** End hunger, ensure food security and better nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
3. **GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING:** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for people of all ages.
4. **QUALITY EDUCATION:** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote learning opportunities for all.
5. **GENDER EQUALITY:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6. **CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION:** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
7. **AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY:** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
8. **DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH:** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
9. **INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE:** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
10. **REDUCES INEQUALITIES:** Reduce inequality within and among countries.
11. **SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES:** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
12. **RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION:** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
13. **CLIMATE ACTION:** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
14. **LIFE BELOW WATER:** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
15. **LIFE ON LAND:** Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt biodiversity loss.
16. **PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS:** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
17. **PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS:** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for sustainable development.

**Examples:**

Category	Germany: Vaude Sport GmbH & Co. KG	Slovakia: Dedoles, s. r. o.
<b>Brief description</b>	Outdoor clothing brand focused on ecological and social sustainability	Online fashion retailer known for bold designs and environmental commitment
<b>Goal</b>	Sustainable production and fair working conditions across the value chain	Sustainable textile production and social engagement
<b>Measures</b>	Climate neutrality, fair production, transparent supply chains, eco-materials	Fair wages, eco-friendly materials, CSR campaigns like “Socks for a good cause”
<b>Social impact</b>	Improved global working conditions, reduced environmental footprint	Support for social projects and awareness for sustainability
<b>Financing</b>	Revenue from sustainable products; reinvestment in CSR and green tech	Product sales; share of profit reinvested in CSR initiatives
<b>SDGs</b>	8 (Decent work), 12 (Responsible consumption), 13 (Climate action)	8 (Decent work), 12 (Responsible consumption)
<b>More info</b>	<a href="http://csr-report.vaude.com">csr-report.vaude.com</a>	<a href="http://dedoles.com/pages/more-about-the-quality-of-our-products">dedoles.com/pages/more-about-the-quality-of-our-products</a>

**Ideas for using in practice enterprise**

Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in a practice enterprise requires a broader perspective – one that goes beyond pure economisation and integrates sustainability, social responsibility and ecological aspects as integral components of the practice enterprise’s business model:

- The practice enterprise should develop a vision from the outset in which the SDGs are anchored as fundamental guiding principles by evaluating all business decisions not only in economic terms, but also in terms of environmental and social responsibility.
- Carry out topic-based projects whose tasks are orientated towards the SDGs. For example, products/services are developed and offered in the practice

enterprise that specifically contribute to environmental protection. Such projects promote creative thinking as the participants of the practice enterprise develop innovative solutions for specific social challenges.

- Introduce regular reflection sessions to discuss the impacts of the decisions made e. g. in relation to sustainable supply chains.

## 2.10 Triple bottom line (People, Planet, Profit)

John Elkington developed the concept of the Triple Bottom Line in 1994. It describes a perspective that considers not only the financial success of a company, but also the social and environmental impact of its actions. The idea behind it is that responsible companies not only generate profits, but also contribute to the well-being of people and the environment.

The three central areas are:

- **People:** This refers to how a company treats its employees and its contribution to the community. This includes, for example, fair working conditions, job creation, equality measures and cooperation with local initiatives.
- **Planet (environment):** This area covers the responsible use of natural resources. A company should operate in an environmentally friendly manner, e. g. through waste prevention, recycling or the use of sustainable materials and processes.
- **Financial (economic gain):** Of course, a company must also be economically successful. Financial gain remains important – but within this concept, it is considered equally important alongside social and environmental goals.

The triple bottom line helps to evaluate companies holistically and make sustainable, responsible actions visible.

**Examples**

Category	Germany: GLS Bank (Bochum)	Slovakia: Nosene
<b>Brief description</b>	Ethical cooperative bank that finances social, cultural, and ecological initiatives.	Sustainable fashion company promoting circular economy through upcycled clothing.
<b>Goal</b>	To support sustainable development by financing social and ecological change	To reduce textile waste and promote conscious consumer behaviour through sustainable fashion
<b>Measures</b>	Transparent ethical banking, investment in renewable energy, social housing, ecological agriculture, education and healthcare	Collection and upcycling of second-hand clothing; awareness campaigns on sustainability and slow fashion; employment of marginalized individuals
<b>Social impact</b>	Strengthens social enterprises and community-based initiatives; promotes ethical financial practices and responsible consumption	Reduces fast fashion impact; creates inclusive employment; supports non-profit initiatives through donations and collaborations
<b>Financing</b>	Customer deposits and cooperative capital; reinvested in sustainable loans and funds aligned with ESG principles	Sales of upcycled fashion; collaboration with NGOs; partial support through public or EU-funded awareness and social engagement projects
<b>SDGs</b>	8 (Decent work), 12 (Responsible consumption), 13 (Climate action), 17 (Partnerships for the goals)	8 (Decent work), 12 (Responsible consumption), 13 (Climate action)
<b>People</b>	Focus on employee well-being, fair salaries, democratic governance model, and community empowerment through accessible banking services	Employment of socially disadvantaged individuals; inclusive and flexible workplace culture
<b>Planet</b>	Sustainable investment strategies; support for ecological businesses; minimised carbon footprint in operations	Extension of clothing lifecycle; reduced textile waste; promotion of eco-conscious living

<b>Profit</b>	Profitable yet purpose-driven; profits are reinvested into impactful, sustainable projects in line with the bank's ethical charter	Financially self-sustaining through product sales; reinvests in social and environmental missions; competitive presence in the sustainable fashion market
<b>More info</b>	<a href="http://www.gls.de">www.gls.de</a>	<a href="http://www.nosene.sk">www.nosene.sk</a>

***Ideas for using in practice enterprise***

In a practice enterprise, the triple bottom line can be used to evaluate business decisions holistically.

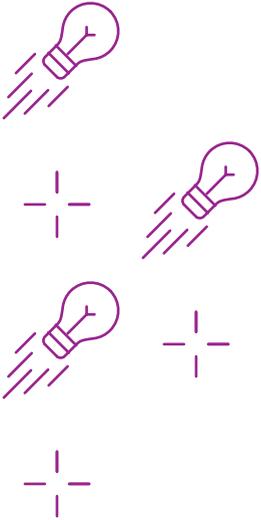
Participants reflect on how their company's actions affect not only financial goals but also employees, the community, and the environment.

They simulate strategies for social responsibility and sustainability and learn how to balance profit with ethical and environmental considerations.

# 3.

Business idea  
generation for  
social practice  
enterprises





In today's world marked by complex social challenges, including climate change, inequality, and mental health concerns, it is essential that education prepares young people not only to understand these issues, but to actively contribute to solving them. For students engaged in Practice Enterprises (PEs), this means learning how to use entrepreneurial tools to create purposeful, socially responsible solutions. This chapter focuses on innovation in social entrepreneurship and introduces a structured innovation process, grounded in Design Thinking, which enables students to transform real-world social challenges into business-based solutions. The methodology is adapted specifically for vocational and secondary education, supporting students as they move from identifying a problem to developing a sustainable business model that creates positive social impact.

## 3.1 Innovation in social entrepreneurship

**Innovation** is often described as doing something new or differently to improve outcomes. In the context of social entrepreneurship, innovation takes on a broader and more purposeful meaning: it is about applying creativity to address real social or environmental needs in ways that are financially viable, sustainable and scalable.



### *Key Idea:*

*Innovation in social entrepreneurship means creating solutions that are new, useful, and focused on making life better for people or the planet.*

**Social enterprises** are businesses that pursue both financial sustainability and social or environmental goals. Combining and integrating innovation and social entrepreneurship concepts into the PE framework equips students with a deeper understanding of how entrepreneurship can be used not only for profit, but for public good. This approach is particularly valuable in education, as it:

- Increases relevance by linking entrepreneurial learning to real-world challenges.
- Enhances motivation and engagement by connecting business with purpose.
- Develops essential competencies such as empathy, creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and resilience.
- Strengthens entrepreneurial thinking, both for students who may launch their own ventures and for those who will drive innovation within existing organisations.
- Fosters a sense of responsibility and agency, empowering students to see themselves as active contributors to societal change.

*Social innovation challenges students to see business not only as a means for generating profit, but also as a powerful tool for creating positive change. It invites young people to look at the world not just through the lens of a consumer or entrepreneur, but as a changemaker—someone who identifies social challenges and actively works to address them through entrepreneurial thinking.*

## Types of social innovation

Innovations in social entrepreneurship are not limited to new products or technologies. What matters is that **they make a meaningful improvement and positive difference**. Innovations can be big or small, high-tech or low-tech and can range from rethinking how services are delivered, developing inclusive hiring practices, redesigning revenue strategies to fund impact to embedding values of equality and sustainability into core business practices.



**Teacher tip:** Encourage students to think of innovation as a mindset.

There are **four innovation types** that are described in the following table:

Type of innovation	Description	Example
<b>Product innovation</b>	A new physical product that improves lives	Solar-powered lanterns for off-grid communities
<b>Service innovation</b>	A new way to deliver help or support	Mobile libraries in rural areas
<b>Business model innovation</b>	A new way to earn money while creating impact	Buy-one-give-one shoes; pay-it-forward cafés
<b>Process innovation</b>	Improving how something is done	Using recycled materials in packaging

## Profit versus purpose: finding the balance

A key feature of social entrepreneurship is the balance between social purpose and financial sustainability. This does not mean students must choose between making money or doing good. Instead, they learn to design businesses that do both. A common myth is that doing good and making money are opposites. In fact, **revenue can help scale up solutions that aim to make a positive change.** When a business earns income, it can reinvest in its mission, pay fair wages, and operate independently of donations or grants. The differences between traditional businesses and social enterprises are described in the following table.

Traditional business	Social enterprise
Focus on profit	Focus on solving a social issue
Success = income	Success = impact + income
Customers = end goal	Customers = partners in change



**Key idea:**

*Social impact: The positive change a business creates for people or the planet.*

*Profit: The income that remains after costs are covered.*

*A social enterprise: aims to balance both — not maximise one at the expense of the other.*



**Reflection prompts:**

*Would you rather work for a company that only focuses on profit, or one that tries to make a difference? • Can you think of a business that helped solve a social problem? • What was innovative about it? • Can you think of a way a business in your community could be more socially responsible?*

## Case study: Social enterprises in action

Each of the following enterprises earns income through business activities while addressing a social or environmental problem. Use these examples to explore how innovation, impact, and financial sustainability can work together.

### Classroom instructions for teacher:

1. Divide students into groups and assign each group a case study.
2. Print or display the following case study descriptions and what questions are students supposed to answer.

#### **SmartHead (Slovakia)**

Sector: Technology / Sustainability

Website: <https://explore.besmarthead.com>

SmartHead is a digital platform that helps companies manage and communicate their sustainability efforts. Businesses use it to track and report their environmental and social performance. Companies pay for access to the platform through subscription-based pricing.

#### **Discovering Hands (Germany)**

Sector: Healthcare / Employment

Website: <https://www.discovering-hands.de>

Discovering Hands trains blind and visually impaired women to conduct breast cancer screening using their advanced tactile skills. These women work in

hospitals and clinics as certified professionals. Healthcare providers pay for these screening services as part of their preventive care offerings.

**FoodCloud (Ireland)**

Sector: Food redistribution

Website: <https://food.cloud>

Connects businesses with surplus food to charities in need using a mobile platform. It generates income through a membership-based model for corporate donors and private sector partners, alongside service fees—while redistributing food to third-sector organisations.

**ShareTheMeal (Germany – global impact)**

Sector: Digital platform / Hunger relief

Website: [www.sharethemeal.org](http://www.sharethemeal.org)

ShareTheMeal is a mobile app that allows users to donate small amounts of money to help feed people in need through the World Food Programme. It earns money through voluntary user donations; part of the donations support the app’s development and operations.

3. Prepare a flipchart or papers and pen for each group.
4. Allow approximately 10-15 minutes of group work and 3 minutes per group for presentations and time for discussions.

**Instructions for students:**

1. Read your assigned case study as a team and highlight the key facts.
2. Discuss the following questions in your group. Write down your answers in clear, simple language.

Question	What to think about
What problem does this business solve?	Identify the social or environmental issue.
How does it earn income?	Is it selling products, services, subscriptions?
What makes it innovative?	What is new or different about its approach?
How does it balance finance profit and impact?	Are both equally important?

3. Prepare to present your answers to the class (3 minutes). You can use a poster, slides, or speak freely.
4. Class reflection – discuss together:
  - Which enterprise had the most interesting model?
  - Which problem would you want to help solve through your own PE?
  - What elements from these businesses could inspire your own ideas?

## 3.2 How to generate business solutions that address social challenges

Within the PE methodology, innovation is not an abstract concept. It becomes a practical, hands-on process that gives students opportunities to explore social challenges and develop entrepreneurial solutions that are both meaningful and viable. By engaging in innovation, students gain real-world experience in identifying and responding to complex social issues. This section introduces a structured method for creating business solutions to social challenges using the principles of Design Thinking (Lišková & Madarászová, 2023). Each step comes with clear learning objectives, classroom-ready activities and assessment criteria that can be used to evaluate the success of the activities. Teachers are encouraged to adapt them to fit their students' age, subject focus, and level of experience.

### Step 1: Choose and understand the social challenge

In this step, students begin the innovation process by selecting a social or environmental challenge they want to address. Rather than immediately jumping into solutions, they take time to explore and understand the issue—who is affected by it, why the challenge exists, and why it is important to help to solve it. This involves reflecting on the world around them, identifying a topic they care about, and conducting basic research to learn more. In this step, students use online sources, news articles, videos, reports to better understand the challenge from different perspectives. The result is a clearly defined and well-informed problem statement that can serve as a foundation for the next steps in the innovation process.

## Why is this step important?

By focusing on one meaningful issue, students are more likely to stay motivated and engaged throughout the project, design solutions that matter to real people, build empathy by understanding who is affected, and strengthen their critical thinking and research skills.

## Learning outcomes:

*By the end of this step, students will be able to:*

- *Identify a real-world social or environmental challenge.*
- *Explain why it is important to help solve the challenge and who is affected by it.*
- *Gather background information through desk research.*
- *Summarise their understanding of the problem in a structured way.*

## Assessment criteria:

Criteria	Description
Relevance	The selected challenge is clearly stated and socially meaningful.
Understanding	The student explains who is affected and why the problem matters.
Research	The student uses online sources to gain background information.
Communication	The problem is clearly summarised.

## Classroom instructions for teachers:

**Suggested time needed:** *Approximately 30 minutes.*

**Materials:** *Access to the internet, paper or notebooks, whiteboard or flipchart and post-it notes.*

**Teacher tip:** *Support students in narrowing down their focus to one specific problem they will work on during the innovation process. Use real-world examples and current news stories to spark curiosity.*

**Ask students:** *What bothers you most about this problem? What would a better future look like for the people affected? These questions help students build empathy and start thinking from an impact-focus perspective.*

## Activity

### A: Explore social challenges around you

Start by thinking about challenges that exist in your everyday environment, in your community, or in the wider world. You can use a whiteboard or a flipchart paper with post-it notes on which the social challenges will be written down. Discuss them as a class. Use one or more of the following prompts to help you reflect:

- What problems do you see in your school or neighbourhood?
- What social topics are important to you personally?
- What have you read or seen in the news recently that made you want to take action?
- Which groups in society often face unfair treatment or limited opportunities?

Examples: Food waste in school cafeterias, lack of accessible public transport for people with disabilities, unemployment among young people, gender stereotypes in sports marketing, social isolation among the elderly.

### B: Choose one problem to focus on

After exploring different challenges, choose one that you would like to solve by a business idea. You can choose democratically by voting and assigning points to social challenges that were mentioned. Pick one that has the most votes. Make sure that the chosen social challenge:

- Has a clear social or environmental dimension.
- Can be researched using online resources (articles, videos, reports).
- Could potentially be addressed through a business idea.

Then write down your chosen challenge in one sentence: **“The problem we want to focus on is...”**

### C: Research the problem

Use available resources to understand the challenge more deeply. You can focus on desk research and look for articles, reports, infographics, or short videos on the topic online. Focus your search on:

- Who is affected by the problem?
- What are the consequences of the problem—how does it manifest in people’s lives?
- Are there any existing solutions?
- What causes the problem to exist?

### D: Summarise what you have learned

Use a paper to answer the following questions. It is important to write it down, as you will use this information in the next steps.

- What is the problem?
- Who is affected by it and how?
- Why is it important to solve it?
- What have you learned about it so far? List key facts from your research.



#### *Reflection prompts:*

*What surprised you while learning about this problem? • Why is this problem meaningful to you?*

## Step 2: Frame the innovation challenge

Now that students have explored a social or environmental issue, the next step is to transform their understanding into a **clear innovation question** that will guide the idea generation process. Instead of writing a formal problem statement, students will reframe the challenge as a “**How might we...?**” question—a creative tool used in design thinking and innovation.

### Why is this step important?

This step helps students focus their thinking and prepares them to brainstorm ideas in Step 3. By framing their chosen issue as a clear and open-ended innovation question, students are better prepared to explore creative, relevant, and feasible solutions. It prevents them from jumping too quickly into vague or pre-defined ideas, and instead encourages critical thinking, curiosity, and empathy. A well-crafted innovation question provides direction for the rest of the process—guiding ideation, prototyping, and ultimately, the development of a responsible business solution.

### Learning outcomes:

*By the end of this step, students will be able to:*

- *Reframe a real-world challenge as a “How might we...?” question.*
- *Focus on a specific need or opportunity within the broader issue.*
- *Prepare for structured ideation in the next step.*

## Assessment criteria:

Criteria	Description
Clarity	The innovation question is easy to understand and focused.
Relevance	It reflects a meaningful need explored in Step 1.
Direction	The question leads clearly into idea generation.
Creativity	The question invites multiple potential solutions.

## Classroom instructions for teachers:

**Suggested time needed:** Approximately 10 minutes.

**Materials:** Flipchart, papers, pens, or whiteboard, innovation question template and examples.

**Teacher tip:** Start the session by writing examples of good and bad “How might we...” questions on the board. You can let the students improve the weak ones together.

Weak question	Why it is weak	Improved version
How might we end poverty?	Too broad and unrealistic	How might we support high school students from low-income families to access affordable school supplies?
How might we make people nicer?	Vague, subjective	How might we create a peer support programme to improve relationships between students?
How might we stop bullying everywhere?	Too big in scope	How might we help new students feel safe and included in their first week of school?
How might we create world peace?	Not practical or actionable for students	How might we reduce conflict between students during group projects?
How might we fix education?	Overly general	How might we help students better understand financial literacy in secondary school?

## Activity

### A: Review your research and insights from Step 1

Look over your notes and summaries. What stands out to you? Ask:

- Who is most affected by this issue?
- What is the biggest unmet need?
- Where is there an opportunity to help?

### B: Turn your insight into innovation questions

These questions will serve as a foundation for brainstorming business ideas that can solve the problem. When drafting the questions, it is important not to focus on solutions already but rather think about different possibilities of how the questions can look like. Your question should open the door to new ideas, not close it.

Use this format: *How might we help [user group] to [achieve something] in order to [address the need or challenge]?*

Examples:

- How might we help students in rural areas access free mental health support?
- How might we support single parents in balancing work and childcare?
- How might we reduce food waste in school cafeterias while raising awareness?
- How might we make healthy meals more affordable for low-income families?
- How might we make school more inclusive for students with disabilities?

### C: Pick one to two questions

These are the questions you will answer during the brainstorming session in the next step (Step 3: Ideation – generating business solutions). Make sure the chosen questions adhere to this checklist:

- Is it focused on a user group?
- Does it reflect the issue you care about?
- Is it broad enough to allow multiple ideas?
- Is it specific enough to stay relevant?



#### **Reflection prompts:**

*What part of the challenge are you most excited to work on? • Did your question open up new possibilities?*

## Step 3: Ideation – generating business solutions

Now that students have identified a specific challenge and framed it as an innovation question, this step guides them through the process of generating **as many business ideas as possible** in response. This is the time to be bold, creative, and open-minded. Rather than trying to find the “right” idea immediately, students are encouraged to **think broadly** and explore different directions. The focus here is on generating a large quantity of ideas that can later be filtered and after that, students will choose one idea that will be developed further.

### Why is this step important?

This step encourages students to unlock their creativity and explore a wide range of possibilities before narrowing their focus. It helps them break out of conventional thinking, builds confidence in brainstorming, and prepares them to experiment with different types of solutions. Strong ideation ensures that students do not settle for the first idea but push themselves to find more effective, innovative, and inclusive ways to address the challenge.

### Learning outcomes:

*By the end of this step, students will be able to:*

- *Generate multiple creative business ideas in response to their innovation question.*
- *Use brainstorming techniques and (optionally) SCAMPER to develop and expand ideas.*
- *Select and organise the most promising ideas for further development.*

### Assessment criteria:

Criteria	Description
Creativity	The student or group generated multiple and original ideas.
Use of tools	Brainstorming and (if used) SCAMPER techniques were applied effectively.
Relevance	Ideas clearly respond to the challenge framed in Step 2.
Presentation	Top 3 ideas are clearly described and ready for further development.

## Classroom instructions for teachers:

**Suggested time needed:** Approximately 15 minutes.

**Materials:** Whiteboard or flipchart, post-it notes, coloured pens.

**Teacher tip:** Encourage students to come up with as many ideas as possible, including unconventional or “wild” ones. The most innovative business solutions often come from unexpected combinations. Judging ideas too early can limit creativity. Make the environment playful and encouraging.

## Activity

### A: Get ready for creative thinking

Create an open, relaxed space where ideas can flow. You can begin with a warm-up activity to boost creative energy. For example: “List 10 unexpected uses for a paperclip in 3 minutes.”

### B: Keep your innovation question visible

This is your creative challenge. You can write down your innovation question on a whiteboard or a flipchart. Under that question, you will write down your ideas—creative business solutions that are answers to your innovation question.

### C: Brainstorming ideas

Brainstorm individually for 5 minutes and write down all your ideas (aim for at least 5). Then work as a group, share your ideas, write them on a whiteboard and continue brainstorming together for 10 minutes. Do not worry if some ideas seem unrealistic—write them down anyway. Follow the brainstorming rules:

- No idea is too silly!
- Do not judge or criticise ideas during brainstorming!
- Build on each other’s ideas!
- Be fast!

**Optional extension:** Use the SCAMPER method to expand your thinking. It helps you explore new directions by asking questions about what you can:

Letter	Prompt	Example
Substitute	What can be used instead?	Use student volunteers instead of paid staff.
Combine	Can ideas be merged?	Cafeteria waste + composting + school garden.
Adapt	What works in another context?	Use a retail loyalty card model to reward reuse.
Modify	Can it be changed in format or tone?	Make it an app instead of a printed campaign.
Put to use	Can something be repurposed?	Use leftover materials to create student kits.
Eliminate	What can be removed or simplified?	Remove packaging to reduce waste.
Reverse	Can you do the opposite?	Give away products for free, earn income elsewhere.

Use a SCAMPER worksheet or apply a few of the prompts that seem most relevant to your idea.

#### D: Now it is time to judge the ideas

You can start by organizing your post-it notes or brainstormed list by grouping similar ideas and look for themes (e.g., digital, events, services, products). Highlight ideas that seem especially innovative, realistic, or socially impactful.

#### E: Select your business idea

As a team choose the top three ideas that have the most potential. For each idea, answer:

- *What is the idea?*
- *Whom does it help?*
- *How could it generate revenue?*
- *What makes it different?*

Next comes the voting for one business idea. You should choose one business idea out of the top three that you will work with further. Use coloured dots or stickers for each student to vote on their favourite ideas. The business idea that collected the most votes wins. Make sure that the business idea solves the problem you described in the previous steps and can also generate revenue.



**Reflection prompts:**

*Which idea surprised you the most? • Which idea feels most exciting to build? • Did working in a group make your ideas better? Why?*

## Step 4: Prototyping the business idea

In this step, students bring their business idea to life by creating a simple prototype—a quick, early version that shows how the idea would work. Prototyping is not about building a product but rather about turning ideas into something visible, tangible, or interactive that others can understand.

### Why is this step important?

Students often imagine a business in their head, but it is only when they try to explain or visualise it that they discover what is missing, unclear, or unrealistic. Prototyping helps them see their idea from the outside—as a customer or user might. A simple prototype makes it easier to talk about the idea and ask others for feedback. Prototypes build clarity, communication skills, and problem solving. Most importantly, they help students move from abstract thinking to practical experimentation.

### Learning outcomes:

*By the end of this step, students will be able to:*

- *Create a basic prototype that shows how their business idea works.*
- *Communicate the concept clearly to others.*
- *Reflect on what their prototype reveals about their business idea.*

## Assessment criteria:

Criteria	Description
Clarity	The prototype clearly shows how the business works.
Communication	The student explained their idea using the prototype.
Effort	The prototype is simple but thoughtfully created.
Reflection	The students reflect on what they have learned from presenting the prototype.

## Classroom instructions for teachers:

**Suggested time needed:** 1 lesson (approximately 45 minutes)

**Materials:** Paper, markers, cardboard, recycled materials, phones/tablets for photos or digital mock-ups, optional slide templates.

**Teacher tip:** Remind students: “Your prototype is not your final product—it is just a quick sketch – just a simple visual explanation on how your idea works. It is better to make something simple than to try to make it perfect. This is important to make sure that everybody in the group understands what the business idea looks like.”

## Activity

### A: Decide what kind of prototype to create

Choose one of the following simple ways to show how your business idea works.

Type of prototype	Description	Example
Paper sketch or diagram	The layout, steps, or structure of the idea.	An app layout, a shop layout, a service flow.
Poster or flyer	How you would promote the idea.	A campaign flyer or product advertisement.
Storyboard	Sequence of images that show a user journey—a step-by-step experience.	How a customer uses your product or service from start to finish.

Roleplay	Act out the service or experience – how the product or service works in action.	Simulate the customer journey – walk through what a customer would do.
Mock-up (physical model)	What the product might look like.	Made with paper, cardboard, LEGO, etc.
Slide presentation	The concept and key features.	A short Slide deck or digital mock-up using tools like Canva or PowerPoint.



**Tip:** Use whatever tools are accessible—you do not need fancy software or materials.

### B: Build your prototype

Create your first version in 30 minutes. Focus on showing the core idea and how it works, rather than getting caught up in the details. Work in pairs or small teams.

### C: Present your prototype to others

Once your prototype is ready, share it with your teacher, classmates or the other teams. Present it in 2 minutes. Explain how your business works and what problem it solves. Ask: *Is it clear what we are trying to do?* Feedback does not have to be formal. Even a simple conversation can help you improve your idea.



#### Reflection prompts:

*What did you learn from making your idea visible?* • *Was the idea easy to explain?* • *Why or why not?*

## Step 5: Building a business model with Lean Canvas

After students have developed and prototyped their idea, this step helps them build a simple and structured business model. The Lean Canvas is a one-page tool that helps students think through how their idea creates value, who it serves, how it generates income, and what makes it different. This step supports students in translating their idea into a clear business concept they can develop further.

## Why is this step important?

The Lean Canvas helps students organise their thinking and move from a creative concept to a real, workable plan. It encourages them to consider both **impact and sustainability**—focusing on the problem they are solving, who it is for, how it works, and how it can be financially supported. By completing a Lean Canvas, students learn how to think like entrepreneurs, make strategic decisions, and communicate their business ideas clearly.

## Learning outcomes:

*By the end of this step, students will be able to:*

- *Identify the key components of their business model.*
- *Describe how their idea creates value and impact.*
- *Communicate their business concept using the Lean Canvas format.*

## Assessment criteria:

Criteria	Description
Clarity	The canvas is complete and easy to understand.
Feasibility	The business model seems realistic and achievable.
Social Impact	The business creates clear social or environmental value.
Communication	The student or group can explain their idea using the canvas.

## Classroom instructions for teachers:

**Suggested time needed:** 1 lesson (approx. 45 minutes).

**Materials:** Printed Lean Canvas templates (A3 preferred), sticky notes or pens, example canvas for demonstration.

**Teacher tip:** Start by showing a filled-in example of a Lean Canvas using a familiar product or service. Remind students that it is okay if not all sections are perfect—the goal is to think through the idea, not to get every detail right.

## Activity

### A: Fill in your Lean Canvas

Use the template to complete each of the nine sections. Work individually or in teams. Use bullet points or short phrases. This is a planning tool, not a full report. Its 9 blocks are:

Block	Description
Problem	What top 1–2 problems are you solving? Who is affected?
Customer segments	Who are your users, and who are your paying customers?
Unique value proposition	What makes your idea special, different, or meaningful?
Solution	What are the key features or services of your idea?
Channels	How will you reach customers or users?
Revenue streams	How will your business earn money or stay financially sustainable?
Costs structure	What are your most important costs?
Competitive advantage	What aspect of your business would be difficult to copy for competitors?
Impact	What social or environmental change will your business create?

### B: Share and explain your business model

Once your canvas is filled in: Prepare a short explanation (3 minutes) of your idea using the Lean Canvas as a guide. Focus on how your business works and what impact it creates. Present to your class, teacher, or peers for informal feedback.

- ?** *Reflection prompts:*  
 What part of the Lean Canvas was easiest to complete? • Why? • What part do you still need to work on? • What is your next step to make this idea stronger?

## 3.3 Measuring impact – tracking success beyond profit

Social enterprises exist not just to earn revenue but also to solve social problems. However, how to know that a social enterprise is really making a difference? In traditional business, success is often measured in profit. But for social enterprises, success must also include positive change in people's lives or the environment. This is what is called social impact. Teaching students to measure social impact helps them understand the real-world value of their practice enterprise.

Impact measurement is the process of tracking, assessing, and communicating the effects a business is having on its target audience or issue. It answers questions like: Are we making a difference? Who is benefiting from our work? How much change have we created? It is about **looking beyond money** to see if a business idea is creating the change it set out to achieve.

### Learning outcomes:

*By the end of this section, students will be able to:*

- *Define what social impact means in the context of their business.*
- *Identify indicators to measure their impact.*
- *Design simple tools to track change.*
- *Reflect on the difference they are trying to make.*

### Assessment criteria:

Criteria	Description
Clarity of impact goal	The student can clearly describe what change they want to create.
Use of indicators	At least 3 appropriate indicators are chosen.
Measurement plan	A simple system for tracking and reflection is developed.
Critical thinking	The student reflects on the difference between profit and impact.

## Classroom instructions for teachers:

**Time needed:** approximately 20 minutes.

**Materials:** Example and template for indicators and tracking (can be found in the activity description below), whiteboard, papers, pens.

**Teacher tip:** This section can feel abstract to students. Use practical examples, numbers, and stories to make it real. Encourage students to think: “If we succeed, what will change and how will we know?”

## Activity

### Step 1: Define your intended impact

Revisit your Lean Canvas, look at your Value Proposition and Impact section, and answer the following questions. Write them down on a whiteboard or a piece of paper.

- What change do you want to see in people, society, or the environment?
- Who benefits from your business idea?
- Why does that change matter?

### Step 2: Translate impact into indicators – choose 3 types of indicators

An indicator is something that can be observed or measured that shows progress toward the goal of the business. Depending on the type of social challenge, students can measure different things and choose at least one indicator from each category:

1. Quantitative indicators (numbers, data, statistics):
  - Number of people helped
  - Hours of service provided
  - Reduction in cost or time
2. Qualitative indicators (stories, opinions, experiences, testimonials):
  - Interviews or testimonials
  - Observations of change
  - Feedback from users
3. Outcome-based indicators (results over time):
  - Improved skills
  - Change in behaviour
  - Community awareness

Common metric examples are:

Goal	Indicator	How to measure	When to measure
Reduce food waste in school	Kilos of food saved per month	Ask kitchen staff to weigh leftovers	Every Friday afternoon
Improve teenage mental health	Number of app users + user feedback	Survey before and after app use	After using the app for 3 months
Create inclusive work opportunities	Number of marginalised people employed	Track employee demographics	Every 3 months
Promote recycling in school	Recycling participation rate	Survey or count bins collected	Two weeks after completing a workshop in school

### Step 3: Design your impact tracking system

1. Make a table with four columns: *Goal, Indicator, How to measure it, When to measure it* as an example above.
2. Assign roles in your team – who will collect and summarise the data?
3. Now you created a plan on how you will know that your practice enterprise achieves its social mission. The next step is to put the plan in practice. Use customer surveys, feedback or observations to measure your impact.



#### Reflection prompts:

*Why is it important to measure impact? • How do you know if your solution is really helping? • What surprised you when thinking about outcomes? • If you had more time or support, what else would you measure?*

## Example: Social enterprise supporting youth mental health

A social enterprise is developed to address rising levels of anxiety and low self-confidence among teenagers, particularly in rural areas where access to mental health services is limited. The enterprise offers a mobile app with mindfulness exercises, peer support forums, and access to online counselling. It also organises in-person workshops in schools to raise awareness and reduce stigma.

## Problem statement

Teenagers in rural areas lack accessible and confidential mental health support, which contributes to increased anxiety, social withdrawal, and reduced academic performance.

## Business idea

A mobile platform that combines:

- Guided mindfulness and stress-reduction exercises
- Anonymised community support forums
- Access to licensed online counsellors
- In-person workshops in partnership with schools

## Impact indicators:

Indicator type	Indicator	Measurement method	When to measure	Result
Quantitative	Number of active users engaging with the app weekly	App usage data (log-ins, completed exercises)	Weekly during the programme	40 students actively used the app weekly for one month
Qualitative	User feedback on perceived improvements in well-being	In-app surveys and testimonials	At the end of a 4-week cycle or after workshops	85% of students reported increased self-confidence after completing the 4-week programme
Outcome-based	Reduction in anxiety-related to school absences	School attendance records (pre- and post-intervention comparison)	At the start and end of each school term or programme cycle	10 students joined a newly formed peer support group and started attending school again

### Interpretation:

These indicators show that the enterprise is not only reaching its intended audience but is also having a measurable impact on behaviour and well-being. While the sample size is small, the results offer meaningful insight for scaling the service and improving programme design.

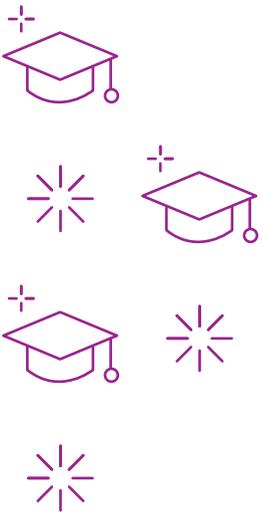




4.

Innovative  
Learning  
and Training

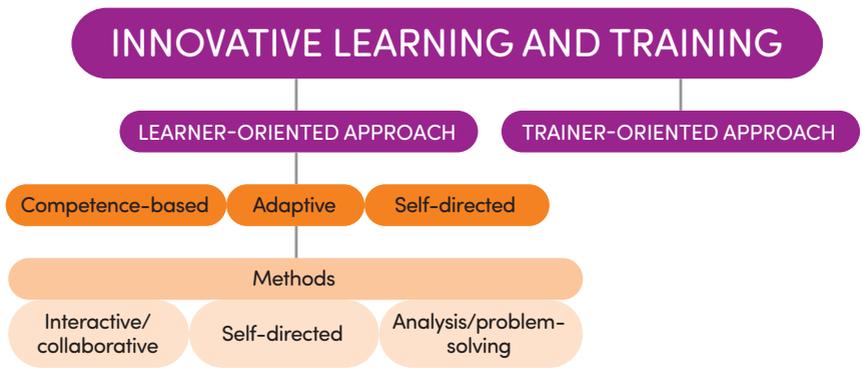




Today's world is characterised by complex changes. These were described in detail in Chapter 1. Education, and modern teaching and learning methods in particular, can play a key role in overcoming these societal challenges. They promote equal opportunities, strengthen digital and social skills and enable lifelong learning. Flexible and practical teaching and learning methods prepare people for the demands of an ever-changing world of work.

Chapter 4 explores innovative teaching and learning approaches that boost students' engagement, foster independence and support the development of practical skills. At the same time, this chapter helps teachers and trainers to create dynamic and inclusive learning environments that meet current needs.

Overview of the approaches and methods presented



## 4.1 Principles of learning and teaching

Didactic principles are fundamental guidelines that structure the planning, design and implementation of teaching and learning processes. They guide teachers in designing meaningful, goal-oriented and learning-promoting lessons and training. These principles address key questions such as:

- What should be learned (content and goals)?
- How should learning take place (methods and media)?
- Who is at the centre of the learning process (students or teachers)?
- Under what conditions does learning take place (learning environment, time, learning group)?

Well-known didactic principles include learner orientation, goal orientation and action orientation. **In the following sections, we will describe didactic principles, focusing particularly on learner-oriented approaches.**

### Competencies as an educational objective

First, we would like to define the term ‘competencies’, which will be used repeatedly throughout the following text.

Competencies are a key educational goal. Beyond mere subject knowledge, they empower individuals to apply their learning independently, solve problems, and adapt flexibly to new professional and social demands. They are becoming increasingly important in all areas of education, from primary school to university level, as they combine institutional learning with individual learning experiences, preparing students for a self-determined life in an increasingly complex world.

Competencies describe the skills and knowledge that a person can use in different situations. They go beyond knowledge and are practical. Competencies are acquired at school, during vocational training or in leisure time and are continuously developed.

The terms ‘skills’ and ‘qualifications’ are often confused. While both relate to professional abilities, there is an important difference between the two. Qualifications are formal diplomas and certificates, whereas skills encompass informal abilities and experience. Example: A school-leaving certificate is a qualification, whereas the ability to work in a team is a skill. Both are important in working life.

There are four competency areas: subject-specific (or professional) competencies, methodological competencies, social competencies and personal competencies.

1. **Professional competencies:** These refer to specific knowledge and skills for a profession, e.g. technical know-how or language skills.
2. **Social competencies:** These relate to working with others and are essential in working life (communication, teamwork or conflict resolution skills).
3. **Methodological competencies:** These include the ability to manage tasks in a structured and efficient way (time management, problem-solving skills, self-organisation).
4. **Personal (character) competencies:** These reflect the ability to work independently, motivation and adaptability (self-discipline, responsibility, ability to work under pressure or perseverance).

## Different educational concepts

### Learner-oriented approach

Learner-oriented teaching is an approach of teaching and learning in which the learner, his interests, questions, impulses and actions shape the learning process. It contrasts with teacher-oriented and socially integrative teaching, which have different aims.

In this way of learning, students are encouraged to take an active role in their education. Rather than simply absorbing the material presented to them, they are encouraged to research topics independently, to engage critically with their peers, and to determine their own pace and goals as much as possible. Even conflicts within the learning process are not resolved by the trainer but by the students themselves.

The trainer intervenes only in critical situations, offering alternative solutions when necessary. The trainer acts as a mentor. Throughout the learning process, students alternate between the roles of knowledge provider and recipient. They become trainers when they have expertise in a particular area, and students when they acquire new knowledge from their peers.

#### **Practical implementation**

Teachers can start designing learner-centred courses by answering key questions about their course.

**1. Define the most important learning objective.**

What should students be able to do at the end of the course?

For example, in a course on social entrepreneurship, students should be able to:

- Analyse social challenges from an entrepreneurial perspective
- Develop a sustainable business model to solve a social problem
- Create a strong pitch for a social business idea

**2. Setting specific, measurable learning objectives**

What specific skills should students acquire in a single lesson?

At the end of the lesson, students should be able to:

- Explain different models of social entrepreneurship and their impact
- Identify key sources of funding for social enterprises
- Conduct a needs analysis to define the challenges of a specific target group

**3. Developing assessment and evaluation skills**

How can we recognise whether students are making progress?

Students can demonstrate their knowledge by:

- Analysing a case study of a successful social enterprise
- Developing a Lean canvas for their own social enterprise idea (A more detailed explanation of lean canvas can be found at the end of the chapter.)
- Preparing and presenting a pitch for investors or stakeholders

**4. Developing interactive learning activities**

Which learning activities will help students to improve their skills?

In class, students could, for example:

- Take part in a simulated investor round and present their social enterprise idea
- Interview local social entrepreneurs to understand real-life challenges
- Develop a prototype of a social enterprise idea in a team and receive feedback from peers

**5. Determining the main course content**

What do students need from teachers in order to make progress?

This process may result in content being removed or added.

- **Keep:** case studies of successful social enterprises, a workshop on impact measurement, resources on funding sources
- **Remove:** a unit that focuses exclusively on traditional entrepreneurship
- **Add:** A session on ethical aspects and long-term sustainability in social entrepreneurship

## Trainer-oriented approach

Trainer-oriented teaching is a structured approach in which the trainer provides the most important stimuli, actions and decisions. The focus is on the systematic transfer of knowledge. The trainer presents content clearly and concisely in order to give students a comprehensive understanding of a topic in a short period.

However, this method does not merely promote passive absorption of information, as is often claimed. By clearly explaining complex issues and presenting different perspectives, it lays the foundation for critical thinking. Accuracy is crucial here – misunderstandings or errors should be avoided, especially in areas with long-term consequences.

A key feature of trainer-oriented teaching is the competence gap between the trainer and the students. The trainers use their experience to guide students towards independent thinking. Although students initially absorb knowledge passively, the learning process should be active and reflective.

### **Practical implementation:**

#### **1. Planning ahead reduces stress**

Plan lessons at least a week in advance using tools such as planning grids or Trello. Build a digital collection of materials early, using resources such as educational platforms, publisher archives, or networks such as Ashoka.

*Example: For social entrepreneurship, organise project materials using Asana and collect real-world case studies from platforms like Impact Hubs.*

#### **2. Define learning objectives**

Reflect on the last lesson: What questions remain? What skills or knowledge should students acquire in the next session?

*Example: Students identify a social problem and design an initial solution. They differentiate between non-profit, for-profit and hybrid models.*

#### **3. Consider skill levels**

Adapt your lesson to different knowledge levels and interests. Use real-life examples to make content relatable.

*Example: Use companies such as “welcome gGmbH” or “Afb Slovakia s.r.o.” to illustrate social entrepreneurship. Further inspiring examples are described in Chapter 2 (2.8 and others). Encourage students to draw on personal experiences of volunteering or entrepreneurship.*

#### **4. Plan in detail**

Structure your lesson from beginning to end. Define your methods and think about how you will record and assess learning outcomes.

*Example: Start with a discussion about social issues. Let students develop business ideas in groups and present them at the end for peer feedback.*

**5. Use a variety of methods**

Mix teaching formats – teacher input, group work or project-based tasks – to address different learning styles, but avoid overloading with too many method changes.

*Example: Create a mind map on social challenges. Let students work in teams to design social business concepts.*

**6. Prepare logistically**

Inform students early about the materials they will need. Reserve rooms, check technical tools, and provide templates, e.g. for business model canvas.

*Example: Before project work, make sure that all technical equipment is working and that everyone has access to the necessary tools for research and presentation.*

**7. Stay flexible and reflective**

Regularly review your materials and approaches. Enable open, flexible lessons that respond to current events or student needs.

*Example: Plan a visit to a local social enterprise or tailor a lesson to include topics suggested by students.*

## Comparison of the key points

Aspect	Learner-Oriented Approach	Trainer-Oriented Approach
Definition	Students guide the process based on their interests and goals.	Trainer leads the process, focusing on structured knowledge delivery.
Learning Approach	Active, exploratory, experience-based	Systematic, structured, and content-focused
Key Features	Autonomy, collaboration, critical thinking, peer learning	Clarity, expert guidance, factual accuracy, clear structure
Learner's Role	Active participant, co-creator, and occasional teacher	Active listener, guided thinker, eventual independent learner
Teacher's Role	Facilitator, mentor, occasional intervener	Instructor, knowledge expert, organiser, evaluator

<b>Goals</b>	Develop autonomy, problem-solving, and lifelong learning skills	Ensure understanding of complex topics; build foundational knowledge
<b>Challenges</b>	Requires high learner initiative and self-discipline	Risk of passive learning if not balanced with interaction
<b>Advantages</b>	Increases motivation, ownership, deep engagement	Efficient, structured, suitable for complex or foundational subjects

In the following, we will focus on learner-oriented approaches because they prepare students particularly well for the demands of a complex (working) world. **They are also a suitable complement to the work-based hands-on approach of the practice enterprise.**

## 4.2 Different learning objectives

### Competence-based learning (and teaching)

The term ‘competence-oriented teaching’ is widely used in education. Competence-oriented teaching means a change of perspective: instead of focusing on working through content, the emphasis is on ensuring that students are able to solve problems independently at the end of a lesson or a thematic unit. The focus shifts from imparting knowledge to active, self-directed learning. Tasks that foster competence development and problem-solving skills play a central role in this.

Content is important: if students are unmotivated or unable to participate, it is difficult for them to acquire new skills (see chapter 3). It is not enough to create learning environments that enable independent learning – choosing the right content is just as important. It is crucial that the learning material stimulates cognitive processes. Curiosity, enthusiasm, doubt and cognitive conflicts can motivate students and encourage deeper thinking. To spark genuine interest, problems should be designed to surprise or provoke thought.

When the learning environment encourages exploratory learning and critical thinking, students are more likely to engage with the subject matter on their own initiative. Effective teaching therefore involves not only selecting appropriate content, but also highlighting its most interesting aspects in such a way as to create cognitive challenges that motivate students to solve the problem independently.

### Designing Effective Task Situations

Task scenarios should contain a clear call to action, such as a specific question or a problem to be solved. The challenge must be complex enough to require the application of skills and the transfer of knowledge. Tasks that are motivating, appealing and relevant effectively engage students. Authentic, problem-oriented task scenarios in which students recognise parallels to their own experiences and see a personal benefit in the challenge are particularly effective in promoting motivation.

It is essential to offer individual learning paths. Overly rigid subtasks that prescribe every step restrict students' autonomy. Instead, a variety of experiences should be encouraged. Critical thinking and active participation should be at the forefront. Problems should be challenging but solvable and promote communication and collaboration. In the early stages of problem solving, allowing students to express their thoughts in their own words can promote understanding.

The insights gained from problem- and project-based learning can be effectively transferred to skills development by adapting teaching approaches accordingly. However, even in open learning environments, a structure is necessary so that students do not feel overwhelmed. The effort involved in creating good task scenarios pays off: students are not only more motivated and engaged, but also gain self-confidence through the experience of their own competence.

### Adaptive learning

Adaptive learning – from the Latin *adaptare* (to adapt) – aims to tailor educational content to each learner's prior knowledge, learning style and background. The target is to enable comparable learning outcomes for all through customised learning experiences.

In a school context, adaptive learning means continuously adapting teaching strategies to individual learning styles, progress and behaviour. Teachers must also take into account external factors that can influence learning success. Cooperation with parents and support systems is crucial in this regard. Supportive learning systems and self-directed learning methods are becoming increasingly important in this context.

**Adaptive learning environments** can be regarded on two levels:

- **Macro level:** Structural adjustments such as division into performance levels, curricular adjustments or the use of suitable learning materials.

- **Micro level:** Direct interaction between teachers and students, e.g. the individual adaptation of tasks or the personalisation of learning content via digital channels.

Adaptive learning is closely related to individualised teaching and learning motivation. While differentiation offers a wide range of learning opportunities, adaptive learning focuses more on effective, goal-oriented learning strategies and their impact on students' personal development and motivation. Through continuous improvement, adaptive learning helps to make education more inclusive and effective.

Modern adaptive learning systems use artificial intelligence (AI) to analyse learning behaviour and adapt content to suit individuals' needs. For instance, argument mining (extracting arguments from texts) can be employed in writing lessons. Such systems provide valuable support, particularly in distance learning, by responding to individual needs and promoting motivation and learning success. However, this is a separate topic and is not a decisive factor here.

One special form of adaptive learning is programmed learning (see below).

## Self-directed learning

**Self-directed learning (SDL)** refers to an educational approach in which students take **responsibility for their own learning**. It overlaps with terms such as self-organised, self-regulated or self-determined learning, and applies to fields such as educational psychology, school education, adult education and vocational training.

Core elements of SDL include

- Self-directed goal setting
- Self-motivation
- Choosing appropriate learning strategies
- Overcoming challenges and distractions
- Monitoring and evaluating progress

In self-determined learning, the individual decides what, how, when, and where to learn.

Self-organised learning, on the other hand, involves working within predefined goals and content, while organising the process independently.

Educational models that promote SDL encourage students to gradually become more autonomous and responsible. In a fully self-determined environment, students define and carry out their own learning plans, managing their own time and content sequencing.

When students teach their peers or help them define educational goals, they are learning by teaching. Although the content and objectives are usually predetermined, students have control over how they present and structure the material. In this way, methodological skills and information literacy are developed in a structured but self-directed way.

Some models, such as democratic schools (e.g. Summerhill), institutionalise SDL by giving students extensive control over their education. SDL is widely used in schools, universities, vocational training and adult education. Compared to teacher-centred models, it emphasises experiential learning, autonomy and personal responsibility.

### SDL Methods and Strategies

SDL offers a variety of teaching methods including

- **Exploratory:** project-based learning, learning stations
- **Presentational:** presentations, role-plays
- **Deepening:** sorting tasks, structured exercises
- **Integrative:** holistic and discovery-based learning
- **Peer-led:** learning by teaching
- **Organisational tools:** learning journals, reflection methods

Other approaches include BarCamps (open, participatory events), coaching, open learning, peer counselling, supervision, training workshops and future labs.

By promoting autonomy, critical thinking and problem solving, SDL equips students with the skills essential for lifelong learning and adaptability in a changing environment.

## Comparison of the key points

Aspect	Competence-Based Learning	Adaptive Learning	Self-Directed Learning
<b>Definition</b>	Focuses on students acquiring skills to solve problems independently	Learning tailored to individual needs, pace, and prior knowledge	Students take responsibility for setting goals and managing their own learning
<b>Learning Approach</b>	Problem- and action-oriented; tasks target real-life application	Personalized; often supported by digital tools and AI	Learner-centred; exploratory and reflective
<b>Key Features</b>	Real-world tasks, critical thinking, individual paths	Learning analytics, instant feedback, adaptive content	Self-motivation, autonomy, goal setting, flexible methods
<b>Learner's Role</b>	Active problem-solver applying knowledge	Engaged user navigating content at personal pace	Self-manager and decision-maker of the learning process
<b>Teacher's Role</b>	Designer of meaningful, challenging tasks; coach	Guide and adjuster of content/tools; may work with AI systems	Facilitator and supporter; shifts control to the learner
<b>Goals</b>	Transfer of knowledge into action; build competencies	Equalize learning success through personalization	Promote lifelong learning skills and independence
<b>Challenges</b>	Requires careful task design and learner motivation	Demands technology infrastructure and content flexibility	High need for discipline and self-regulation
<b>Advantages</b>	Deep learning, relevance, engagement through real problems	Efficient, inclusive, learner-centric, improved learning outcomes	Autonomy, adaptability, strong personal ownership of learning

## 4.3 Methods of the learner-oriented approach

The learner-oriented approach is associated with various methods.

These include:

- **Interactive methods**, such as project-based learning, game-based learning and programmed instruction (e.g. **work experience in a PE**).
- **Self-directed learning methods**, such as research-based learning, action-oriented learning and learning by doing (e.g. **work experience in a PE**).
- **Analysis/problem-solving methods**, e.g. design thinking and the Lean Canvas method (e.g. **work experience in a PE**).

Here is an overview of all the methods and how they relate to the learning goals. We will introduce these methods below.

Methods / Learning objectives	Competence-based learning	Adaptive learning	Self-directed learning
<b>Interactive methods</b>			
Project-Based Learning	✓		✓
Gamification	✓	✓	✓
Programmed Learning	✓	✓	
<b>Self-directed learning methods</b>			
Research-based Learning	✓		✓
Action-oriented Learning	✓	✓	✓
Learning by Doing / Training on the Job	✓		✓
<b>Analysis/problem-solving methods</b>			
Design Thinking	✓	✓	✓
Lean Canvas	✓	✓	✓

**Explanations:**

**Competence-based teaching and learning** is supported by methods that focus on the application, analysis and synthesis of knowledge – i. e. almost all of the above.

**Adaptive learning** benefits particularly from structured or flexible methods such as programmed learning or gamification.

**Self-directed learning** is promoted by open, creative, exploratory and reflective methods such as project-based learning or learning by doing.

## Interactive/collaborative methods

### Project-Based Learning

**Project-Based Learning (PBL)** engages students with real-world challenges similar to those encountered in professional practice. Students work collaboratively on assigned or self-defined tasks that involve identifying a problem, developing a solution and implementing it largely independently within a set timeframe. A presentable outcome is required and the whole process reflects real workplace dynamics, adapted to the level of the learner. Ongoing feedback and reflection support both the process and the result, developing key professional skills.

#### *Why learn through projects?*

Sustainable learning occurs when students take responsibility and actively participate. Educators should provide structured environments that

- present authentic, real-world problems that motivate students
- support independent and self-directed work
- include social learning through collaboration and mentoring

PBL strengthens knowledge retention and skill development. Students benefit from team diversity, play to their strengths and develop soft skills such as initiative, motivation and collaboration. Integrating these skills into assessment – with feedback and reflection – improves learning outcomes.

#### *Example of implementation in a practice enterprise:*

In a PE, the marketing department wants to develop and implement a large-scale marketing campaign for a new product.

The project planning includes a kick-off meeting in which the project is presented, goals are set and teams are formed for various tasks (e.g. market research,

design, social media, sales). In accordance with the project plan, market research is carried out on the 'practice enterprise market'. This consists of a target group analysis (identification of the target group and its needs) and a competitive analysis (identification of the competitors and their marketing strategies). Campaign development begins with brainstorming to generate creative ideas for the campaign. The team then creates promotional materials (flyers, posters, online banners) and texts e.g. for social media channels.

The implementation phase includes planning and executing social media posts and ads, organising events or webinars to present the products, developing sales strategies and training the sales team.

In the evaluation phase, feedback is collected from customers, team members, the results of the campaign are analysed, and opportunities for improvement are identified.

## Game Based Learning, Gamification, Serious Games

Gamification refers to the use of gaming principles – such as points, levels and rewards – in non-gaming contexts to improve engagement, motivation and learning outcomes. In education, gamification supports active learning, encourages desired behaviours and creates a sense of progress and autonomy. By incorporating elements such as scoring systems, unlockable levels or small rewards, gamification appeals to students' intrinsic motivation and desire to achieve.

This approach promotes knowledge retention by reinforcing success. When students complete a task and receive positive feedback – whether through visual effects, sounds or simple acknowledgement – the brain's reward system is activated, strengthening memory and motivating further participation. Even small elements such as leader boards or digital confetti can create a lasting sense of achievement.

One of the strengths of gamification is its adaptability to different learning preferences. A combination of visual, auditory and experiential elements – such as videos, interactive challenges or role-playing games – keeps students with different learning styles on board. These diverse methods encourage both independent exploration and collaborative learning.

Gamification also helps to maintain motivation in the long term. Competitive elements such as team-based challenges or scoreboards can create friendly rivalry and motivate perseverance. Even minimal incentives – such as recognition or small prizes – can significantly increase engagement and promote a deeper connection to the learning process.

### ***Gamification vs. Serious Games vs. Game-Based Learning***

Gamification is often confused with serious games and game-based learning, but there are clear differences:

- ***Gamification*** applies individual playful elements (e.g., points, badges, scoreboards) to non-playful settings.
- ***Serious Games*** are fully developed games whose goals go beyond entertainment and are often used in education and training (e.g. flight simulators).
- ***Game-Based Learning*** involves educational games that have been specifically designed for structured learning experiences (**our board game**).

Both serious games and game-based learning take advantage of the fact that experiential learning improves knowledge retention. These approaches bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, fostering immersive and engaging educational experiences.

Serious games also enable personalized and interactive learning experiences, overcoming social, cultural, and linguistic barriers. By simulating real-world conditions, they help students develop problem-solving skills in a risk-free environment. Game-based learning further helps reduce pressure by making knowledge acquisition more intuitive and enjoyable.

### ***Example of implementation in the practice enterprise:***

In a PE, the business Game “Scale Up!” is used. It is an interactive learning game that teaches the basics of business management using practical examples.

It consists of seven business cases, each with eight to ten cards. Each card describes a business situation that the player implements online in the Odoo ERP system and then compares with the solution on the back of the card.

The business cases cover various aspects of business management, such as setting up a retail store, implementing a production line or starting an e-commerce business.

The game is easy to understand and requires no prior knowledge, allowing players to gain valuable knowledge about business management and ERP software in a fun way

## **Programmed learning or instruction**

Programmed learning is a special form of adaptive learning. AI-supported systems are playing an increasingly important role in this field today.

Adaptive learning **tailors the delivery of knowledge to the learner's level**, learning preferences and background. The aim is to enable all students to achieve comparable learning outcomes. In recent years, the importance of digital learning systems and self-learning tools has increased significantly. These applications not only support teaching, but also facilitate the acquisition, use and management of knowledge. A particular focus is on learning programmes and software solutions with an educational character.

A well-known example is programmed learning. Here the learning material is presented in a logical, structured sequence – in small steps or larger learning units. After each section, students have to answer questions to test their understanding. The correct answers are displayed immediately, providing continuous feedback. This method ensures an active learning process and allows immediate monitoring of progress.

A particularly interesting area of adaptive learning is its combination with artificial intelligence (AI). Here, learning formats are tailored to the individual learner, so that the focus is on the learner's needs rather than a rigid curriculum. The main advantage of this method is that it supports each learner based on their individual strengths. This increases motivation and significantly improves the chances of educational success.

Adaptive learning means that courses are no longer strictly prescribed, but can be designed flexibly. This includes the content, the learning units, the methods used and the time required for the course. This ensures that the course is neither too easy nor too difficult and that students' prior knowledge is taken into account. In addition, individual differences fade into the background as the content is tailored to the individual's needs. The key is AI that adapts the content in real time to the learner's progress. Existing knowledge is recognised and not repeated, while gaps in knowledge are targeted in subsequent lessons. This makes adaptive learning not only efficient, but also more sustainable. In its purest form, this concept is particularly well suited to digital learning environments such as e-learning platforms.

Thanks to intelligent algorithms and individual customisation, adaptive learning is revolutionising education – moving away from rigid curricula and towards personalised and effective knowledge transfer.

***Example of implementation in the practice enterprise:***

New employees acquire knowledge and skills in the existing ERP system step by step through a modular learning programme.

- They work through the modules at their own pace and receive immediate feedback.
- The programme adapts the learning content through personalised learning paths and integrates interactive practical exercises and simulations based on the employee’s progress.
- The level of knowledge is regularly checked through tests and quizzes.

## Comparison of the key points

Aspect	Project-Based Learning (PBL)	Gamification / Game-Based Learning / Serious Games	Programmed Learning
<b>Definition</b>	Learning through real-world projects with a clear outcome	Use of game elements or the full game to support learning processes	Personalized learning tailored to the learner’s needs and progress
<b>Learning Approach</b>	Collaborative, problem-solving, goal-oriented	Motivational, interactive, challenge-based	Data-driven, flexible, self-paced
<b>Key Features</b>	Realistic tasks, teamwork, feedback, reflection	Points, levels, feedback, simulations, competition	Modular content, real-time feedback, AI support
<b>Learner’s Role</b>	Active problem solver and team member	Engaged player completing the tasks or challenges	A self-directed learner progressing at their own pace
<b>Teacher’s Role</b>	Guide and facilitator	Motivator and game facilitator	Content designer and progress monitor
<b>Goals</b>	Competence building, applied knowledge, and teamwork	Boost motivation, make learning fun and memorable	Improve outcomes through personalisation and efficiency
<b>Challenges</b>	Time-consuming, group dynamics, assessment difficulty	Risk of distraction, unequal engagement, development effort	Technical complexity, less social interaction
<b>Advantages</b>	Deep learning, ownership, collaboration	Higher engagement, fun learning, better retention	Personalised pace, targeted support, efficient learning

## Self-directed learning methods

### Research-based learning

Research-based learning is a further development of discovery-based learning. In discovery-based learning, students acquire knowledge independently through active engagement with problems. Research-based learning expands on this approach by encouraging students to systematically formulate questions, develop hypotheses and search for answers using scientific methods.

#### *Features of research-based learning*

Research-based learning follows a **clearly structured process** that replicates scientific work (see Huber, 2009):

- **Identification of a problem or phenomenon:** Students identify a question they want to investigate.
- **Formulate a research question:** Students develop a specific question that they can answer through their own research.
- **Gathering ideas and hypotheses:** Hypotheses are formulated and tested through further research.
- **Carrying out investigations or experiments:** Students conduct investigations or experiments.
- **Observation and documentation:** Results are recorded and systematically collected.
- **Evaluate and reflect:** Data is analysed, and conclusions are drawn.

This process enables students to gain new insights independently and to engage critically with the research topic.

#### *Challenges and requirements*

Studies show that research-based learning can be challenging for some students, especially if they have little experience of working independently (see Clearinghouse, 2017). Effective research-based learning therefore requires teachers to create appropriate conditions (see Huber, 2009):

- Select a relevant topic that motivates students and is close to real life
- Provide resources such as books, laboratory equipment or digital tools
- Structured work processes from research to presentation
- Individual support from teachers by providing feedback and targeted assistance

### ***Advantages of research-based learning***

When research-based learning is well structured and supported, there are many benefits for students:

- ***Increased motivation:*** independent work stimulates interest in a subject
- ***Lasting learning:*** knowledge gained through one's own work is remembered longer
- ***Deeper understanding:*** scientific methods and expertise are put into practice
- ***Increased problem-solving skills:*** students develop strategies to answer complex questions independently
- ***Improved teamwork skills:*** research-based learning encourages collaborative work

Research-based learning is an effective approach to prepare students for the demands of the modern knowledge economy (see the PISA 2015 companion study).

### ***Example of implementation in the practice enterprise:***

The customer service staff in the practice enterprise are to use research-based learning to find out how customer satisfaction can be improved.

In a brainstorming session, the employees collect questions related to the topic of customer satisfaction, e.g. "What factors influence customer satisfaction the most?" and then derive the central research question, e.g. "How can we improve our customer service to increase customer satisfaction?"

The staff research relevant information on customer satisfaction and analyse existing customer data and feedback to identify patterns and trends. Based on the information gathered, employees develop hypotheses, e.g. "Faster response time to customer enquiries leads to higher satisfaction".

As part of a pilot project, they are testing measures to improve customer service and systematically documenting the results and customer feedback.

The hypotheses formulated are tested by analysing the collected data and recommendations are derived. They present the results and recommendations to all sales employees and discuss these with them.

## **Action-oriented learning**

**Action learning** is an educational approach in which students acquire knowledge and develop practical skills by **engaging in realistic situations**. In addition to knowledge transfer, the focus is on developing social skills and the ability to act self-reliantly. Students take responsibility for their learning process by working

on practical tasks, which deepens their understanding, increases their learning success and builds self-confidence.

This method encourages self-determined, critical thinking and cooperative learning. Through active engagement with complex content, students acquire cross-cutting skills. Particularly in vocational education and training, action-oriented learning effectively bridges the gap between theory and practice and prepares students to face real-life challenges, make decisions and solve problems in dynamic environments.

As the demands of the business world continue to evolve, education must go beyond theoretical instruction to promote teamwork, adaptability, and a sense of responsibility. Action-oriented teaching focuses on realistic learning environments where knowledge is actively applied through individual or group tasks. These scenarios are designed to reflect real working conditions and help students to acquire not only technical knowledge but also the ability to act competently under pressure.

### ***Role of the teacher***

In activity-based learning, the teachers act as a designer of learning situations and as a learning consultant. Their tasks include:

- Providing practical tasks
- Supporting learning processes through targeted feedback
- Supporting independent information gathering
- Promoting independent solutions
- Organising self-learning formats with key texts and working materials

Teachers increasingly take a back seat and allow students to actively shape their own learning process. They moderate technical discussions and ensure that what has been learned is reflected upon in order to support knowledge transfer. This requires flexibility and a high level of technical expertise in order to be able to respond to unexpected questions and challenges.

### ***Example of implementation in the practice enterprise:***

The practice enterprise wants to develop a new product and launch it on the market. The employees are actively involved in all steps of this process.

- They collect ideas for new products based on market analyses and customer feedback.
- They draw up a detailed project plan. This includes tasks, responsibilities and schedules.

- The actual product development is a ‘black box’ within the practice enterprise. The employees develop a marketing strategy, including advertising campaigns and social media activities.
- Based on the marketing strategy, they plan and implement sales activities, e.g. sales promotions and partnerships.
- The employees organise an event or campaign to launch the new product.

## Learning by doing / Training on the job

Learning by doing is an experiential model: the best learning takes place when students try something out for themselves or actively apply new skills.

In addition to practical implementation, reflection also plays a central role: what went well, where were challenges, and how can you do it better next time?

This method is widely used – whether at school, in vocational training or at university. It not only imparts theoretical knowledge, but also promotes practical application, for example through projects, internships, student companies or practice enterprises.

Learning by doing is not limited to childhood or youth, but accompanies us throughout our lives. Whether you are 20, 40 or 60 years old, new skills can be acquired at any time through active experimentation and practical experience. This principle is particularly important in professional life, where many skills can only be consolidated through practical application.

### ***On-the-job training – learning at the workplace***

On-the-job training refers to the acquisition of knowledge directly in the workplace through practical experience. Students acquire skills by performing real tasks, often referred to as ‘learning by doing’. This method is widely used in human resource development and is used for onboarding, preparing for management roles or changing job responsibilities. A typical example is a trainee programme in which graduates are introduced to their roles through practical assignments.

New employees start under the supervision of experienced colleagues and gradually take on more responsibility. As their confidence and competence grow, they begin to work independently and receive feedback. This approach is often complemented by targeted training or mentoring to reinforce learning and enable long-term skills development.

**Example of implementation in the practice enterprise:**

In a practice enterprise, new employees are trained in the use of the ERP system directly at their workplace. The training begins with a brief introduction to the basic functions of the system. An experienced colleague accompanies the new employees. He or she acts as a mentor and supports them during their training period.

The employees use the system to complete their daily tasks with the support of their mentor. They gain practical experience through real-life accounting cases and tasks. The mentor gives regular feedback and suggests improvements, so they can correct mistakes.

Daily or weekly Q&A sessions round off the on-boarding process. In the sessions, employees can discuss their questions and challenges. If required, they receive additional training on specific system functions.

**Comparison of the key points**

Aspect	Research-Based Learning	Action-Oriented Learning	Learning by Doing / On-the-Job Training
Definition	Learning through systematic research processes based on scientific inquiry	Learning by engaging in realistic tasks that reflect workplace conditions	Learning through active, hands-on engagement with tasks in real or simulated work environments
Learning Approach	Inquiry-driven: formulate questions, test hypotheses, analyse data	Task-driven: solve real-world problems in a structured and collaborative way	Experience-driven: try, practice, reflect, and improve through direct application
Key Features	Follows a scientific process: problem, hypothesis, research, data collection, analysis, reflection	Focus on autonomy, problem-solving, teamwork, decision-making, and responsibility	Focus on experiential learning, mentorship, and iterative improvement
Learner's Role	Researcher: formulates questions and conducts investigations	Active participant: takes initiative and responsibility for practical outcomes	Practitioner: performs real tasks, learns from feedback and experience

<b>Teacher's Role</b>	Facilitator and guide in the research process	Learning designer, coach, and feedback provider	Mentor or supervisor, offering support, guidance, and correction during practical work
<b>Goals</b>	Develop research competence, critical thinking, and independent knowledge acquisition	Prepare for real-world challenges, foster competence and decision-making skills	Build workplace readiness, reinforce theory with practice, support lifelong learning
<b>Challenges</b>	Requires support, time, and structure; can overwhelm inexperienced students	Needs realistic scenarios and flexible educators; may require complex planning	Learning outcomes may vary with supervision quality; limited theoretical depth if not supplemented
<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourages independent thinking and autonomy</li> <li>• Long-term knowledge retention</li> <li>• Develops scientific and analytical skills</li> <li>• Enhances teamwork and communication skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly relevant and motivating</li> <li>• Builds transferable soft and hard skills</li> <li>• Bridges theory and practice</li> <li>• Prepares students for dynamic environments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quickly acquire skill through practice</li> <li>• Increases confidence and readiness for real-world tasks</li> <li>• Adaptable for all ages and career stages</li> <li>• Immediate feedback supports rapid improvement</li> </ul>

## Analysis/problem-solving methods

### Design Thinking

Design Thinking is an approach to solving complex problems and generating new ideas. Design Thinking is a method, a set of principles, a specific way of thinking and a process with a variety of supporting tools. It is based on the work of designers and architects. The aim is to find solutions that are convincing from the user's point of view and at the same time market and product oriented.

There are several models for Design Thinking processes. According to the Hasso Plattner Institute in Potsdam, the six steps of Design Thinking can be described as follows:

1. **Understanding:** The best way to solve a problem is to let a team work on it. Everyone needs to understand what it is all about. Questions the team should ask itself: *What needs to be developed or improved? Who should be affected by the development? What are the most important points we need to consider? What should the solution be able to do?*
2. **Observe:** The aim of observation is to put yourself in the customer's position. An analysis of the customer's needs can be carried out, e.g. through an interview, everyday observation or role-playing. It is important to let the customer talk. Good listening and observation are the most important parts of the work, otherwise misunderstandings may arise or important details may be overlooked.
3. **Define point of view:** Combine the results of the first two steps. Using techniques such as personas or viewpoints, the point of view is defined both visually and in writing.
4. **Generating ideas:** The first step is brainstorming. All ideas, no matter how crazy or utopian, are collected. The results are structured and prioritised. It is important to consider the effectiveness, feasibility or cost-effectiveness of each idea. It is also common to look at the competitors.
5. **Prototype:** A prototype is created for illustrative purposes. Perfection and completeness are not important. The simpler the better. Techniques used in prototyping include wireframes, post-it notes, role-playing, storyboards and models. The prototype is adapted to the needs of the people involved. It is important that you can visualise or test the solution to a problem with the prototype.
6. **Testing:** Finally, the developed product must be tested. Feedback is important here. Flexibility is also required: if an idea does not work, it is discarded. Customers are closely observed during the prototype test phase. Their reactions are used to develop further ideas and improvements. Design Thinkers are also open to new suggestions during this phase. If a fault is discovered during the testing, it is rectified, and the process is repeated with the improved or new prototype. It is not unusual for new products to undergo several testing phases before the customer is satisfied, and the product can be launched on the market.

**Example of implementation in the practice enterprise:**

In the context of a practice enterprise, design thinking could embody a holistic approach to solving complex, often multi-layered challenges in a creative and user-centred way.

In a practice enterprise, participants learn to put themselves in the shoes of their potential customers and develop solutions that address real problems. This creates a close link between product development and actual market needs.

The participants also learn that ideas do not have to be perfect from the outset, but can be developed into market-ready solutions through repeated optimisation.

## Lean Canvas

The **Lean Business Model Canvas**, also known as **Lean Canvas**, is a visual planning tool specifically designed to help entrepreneurs and founders present their business ideas, strategies and business models in a clear and structured way. It is based on the well-known **Business Model Canvas** introduced by Alexander Osterwalder and Yves Pigneur in their book *Business Model Generation*.

The **Lean Canvas** was designed by Ash Maurya as a leaner and more practical evolution of the original model. It is particularly suitable for start-ups and young companies that want to quickly test, adapt and develop their ideas. In a compact, one-page format, the Lean Canvas focuses on the key elements that are crucial for entrepreneurial success.

The Lean Canvas is a flexible and practical tool that can be developed collaboratively within a company. It is ideal for structured brainstorming, validating assumptions and rapid iterations – especially when customer feedback or market changes require a strategy adjustment.

It is a valuable tool for refining business ideas, promoting a common understanding within the team, and making informed and agile strategic decisions – especially in a dynamic and challenging business environment.

### ***Example of implementation in the practice enterprise:***

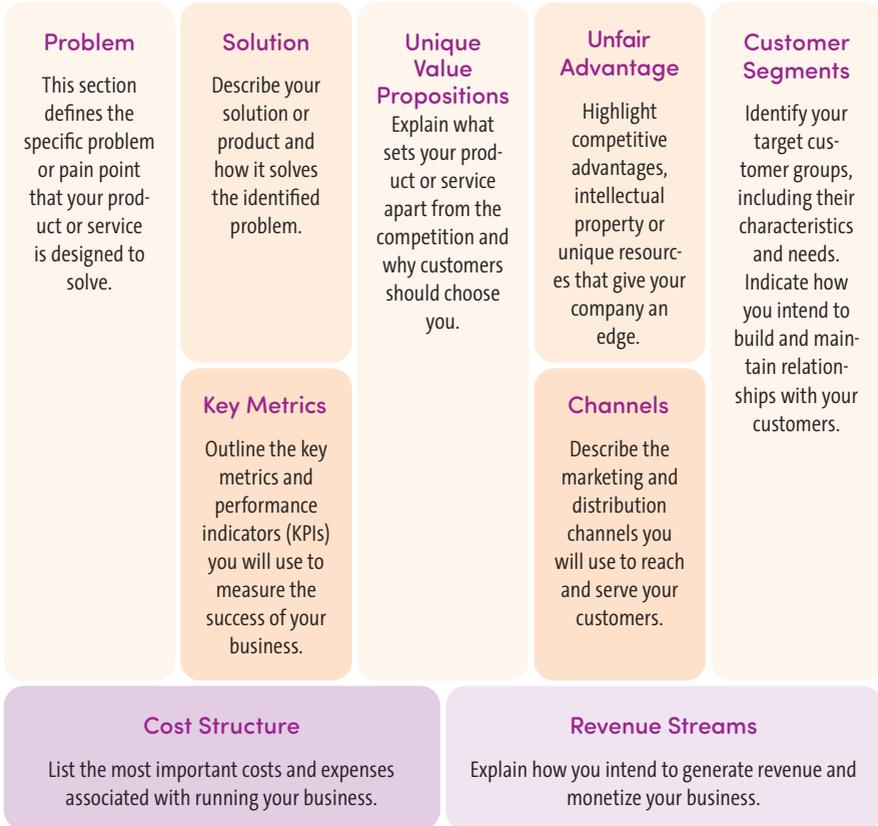
The Lean Canvas could be a practical, visual tool in the context of a practice enterprise that concisely structures and supports the entire planning and validation process of a business idea.

Students can thus recognise at a glance which components (problem, solution, target group, unique advantage, channels, revenue mechanisms and cost structure) are critical for success. It enables participants to formulate hypotheses, test them in project simulations and make continuous improvements based on feedback.

In the environment of a practice enterprise, participants learn to focus their energy on the aspects that have the greatest impact on success without getting

lost in the details. By systematically analysing all the relevant components of a business model, participants learn to think strategically and question critically—for example, how they can differentiate their offering from the competition or which cost structures and revenue mechanisms are most promising.

**Here are the key elements of the Lean Canvas:**



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**STARTUP**

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Learning Kit  
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*Hekima*

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