TOOLBOX FOR EXPERIMENTING WITH COOPERATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

ACTIVITY

Objective:

Experiment how to design and deliver meaningful and relevant learning experiences for students through the simulation of the creation of a cooperative enterprise, with the aim of understanding the limits and opportunities of the training methodology. Use of various tools to identify solutions.

Development:

Step 1: Setting the context for a hands-on format of cooperative entrepreneurship

This first step is key for the development of our activity/learning experience since we shall lay the foundations for the rest of our design. This step includes deciding:

- **The format:** We need to decide what format our learning experience will have. It can be, for example an idea competition, a develop a coop activity, a challenge solving... There are plenty of options, we just need to decide which fits better on our environment.

- **The learning objectives:** It is very important to have clear objectives about what we want to obtain from this learning experience. For example, at this point, we can set the competences we want our participants to develop.

- **The scope:** We need to decide whether we want to focus on a general scope or opt out for a thematic or topic-specific scope.

- **Onboarding on students:** It is fundamental to stablish from the very beginning the typology of the learning experience. In this regard, we need to decide if the activity will be part of the curriculum, elective, or even extracurricular. This point also focuses on the characteristics of the students who will take part of the learning experience. Pay special attention to diversity and their background.

- **Incentives for participation:** For engaging students in every learning experience it is crucial to keep them motivated. Therefore, we need to have clear incentives for their participation. They can be intrinsic, because they want themselves to improve their knowledge/skills or to know more about the cooperative movement, or extrinsic, for example having an impact on their grades, having a prize or a recognition...

- **Other stakeholders:** A this point we can decide to include into the learning experience other key stakeholders. For example, you can get cooperatives or other educative institutions to be co-organizers, or act as mentors/judges... It really depends on to what extent you want to mobilize people.

- **Execution:** This part includes everything related to logistics, such as the location, the materials and resources required, the duration of the learning experience. Also, it is the moment to decide how to break the ice and create the teams. The development of the learning experience can depend a lot on this last aspect, since you usually do not get the same results from a team that has never worked together before, but share some characteristics, than from a team of people who already know each other, even though they can be more different.

- **Learning assessment:** How the learning experience will be assessed/ evaluated. For example, you can use self-assessment tools, give credits, have a final judgement...

Step 2: Deciding the approach to cooperatives development

Once the main aspects of our learning experience are set, it is time to focus on the way we will include cooperatives into the experience. There are different approaches that can be taken:

- **The big issue: understanding the problem.** Since coops arise from proactive problem solvers, this "scratch-your-itch" approach is useful to include cooperatives. These are some tips to include this approach:
  - Promote a user/community-centric vision of needs, issues and problems
  - Provide macro trend in social impact, social innovation, trends also in coop innovation
  - Provide real examples (guest speakers, case studies) for inspiration

- Prepare toy-examples to play with

- Introduce creativity tools (e.g., decks with examples to flip for discussion)

- Elicit personal problems which might be solved by gathering similar users in a coop

- Specificities with respect to Startup education

- **Copycat.** The copycat approach focuses on focusing on an existing cooperative example and developing an adaptation. These are some options to include this approach:

  - Adapt to a different setting (different local community, etc.)

  - Scalability of an existing coop (expansion, replication, partnership, etc.)

  - You could have a coop collaborating as a "challenge provider"

- **Start from a specific problem -> "can I solve the same problem for other communities?".** Quite based on the adaptation, this approach focuses on finding an existing coop and giving it a twist. For example, by:

  - improving existing market and coop solutions

  - tackling different target users

  - including excluded/marginated groups by current status-quo

- **Start from a specific user (community) -> "great entrepreneurs fall in love with users and try to tackle their new emerging needs".** Instead on focusing on a problem or a challenge, this approach aims at establishing a connection with the community and the user ant develop solutions based on their needs.

  - Understanding emerging new problems

- **Start from you as a member of your communities.** Quite similar to the previous one, but this time focusing on a community the student/participant belongs to. For this you need them to focus on:

  - Which communities do you participate in (e.g., scout / voluntaries / etc.)?

  - What problems do you have int this community (scratch your itch perspective)?

■ **Facilitation techniques to raise ideas from the students.** If any of these approaches fit for you, you can try different techniques for ideas generation.

- ■ Idea funnel

- ■ Dotmocracy

- ■ Brainstorming

- ■ 1-minute pitch session

Step 3: Designing the program

The next step would be to design the actual program. In this regard, we need to set up the complete workflow and decide which steps to include.

- ■ Team Forming – Problem – User – Solution – Market Analysis (Status Quo A.) – Validation – Business Modelling – Cash flow analysis and timeline – Model of governance – Pitching and presentation – Feedback.

Note that you do not necessarily have to include all these steps.

In addition, it is also time to decide what type of teaching tools will be included into the program. Find below some examples that could be included:

- ■ Ice-breaking and team building, lectures (coop basics, idea generation and deployment, tutorial on tools, flipped classroom material), interactive workshops (group presentations, feedback sessions, collaborative discussions), unassisted teamwork, tea, mentoring by experts, dry run pitching sessions...
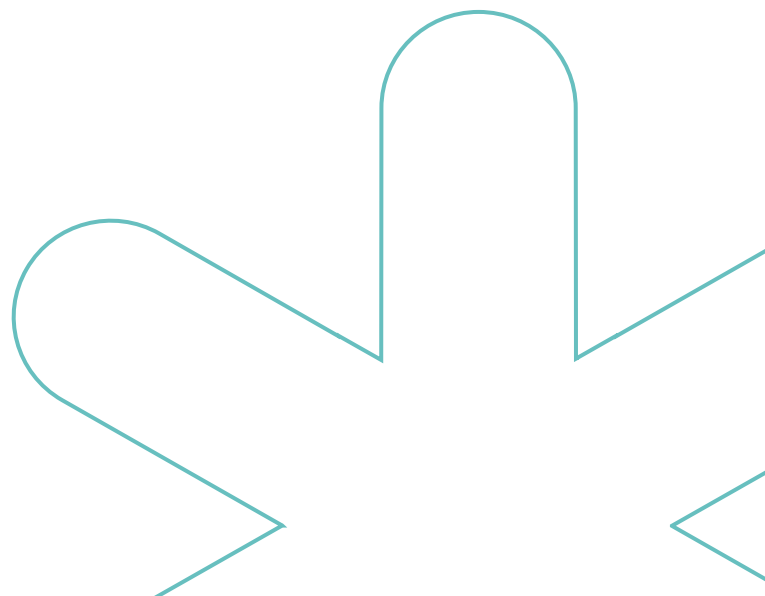
Step 4: Techniques to develop the coop idea

Once we have the workflow established and the activities that we will be including, we need to focus on the different techniques that participants could use to develop their coop idea. Note that it is very important to be coherent with what we established back in step 2. Below you can find a list of different techniques that could help participants, but remember, you can include other techniques if you wish.

- Co-Design

- Design thinking / Sprint session

- Participatory design methodologies

- Co-op mindset

- Collaborative & co-op tools to "get the work done" and also learn the coop values

- Startup tools

- The User Customer Problem framework / Value Proposition Canvas

- Business Model Canvas / Revenue modelling

- Validation tools
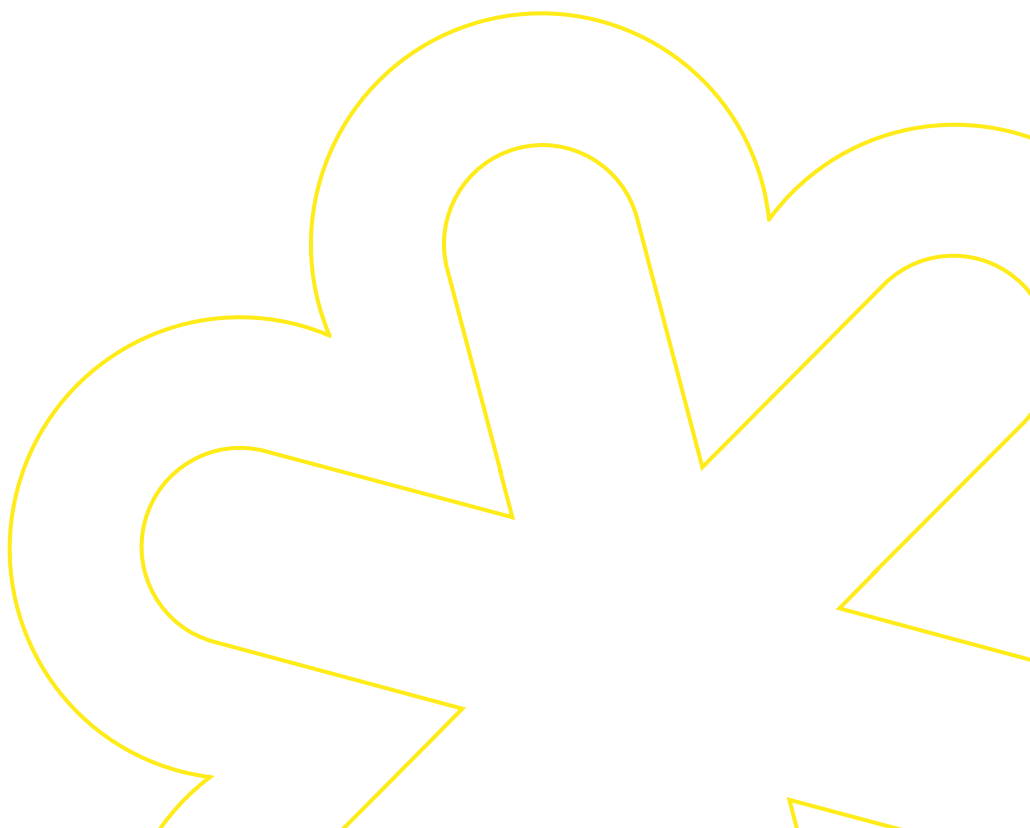
Step 5: Engaging with stakeholders & codesigning your learning program

The final step is very recommended to follow. If we want the program to be appealing and have an impact on our community, or to create actual relationships for the participants with the cooperative movement, we shall try to involve stakeholders into the design/development of the learning experience. There are different ways in which we can include these stakeholders into the design of our program:

- Coops offering their case for "check-up interventions" or posing "improvement challenges"

- Students working as analysts/consultants

- Lifelong learning and cross-organisational teams (w/ students and coop members)

- Role of coops members as mentors, judges, etc.

- Selection of stakeholders

- Commitment, resources, effort, etc.

- Sponsorships, internships, talent placement, etc.

- Intellectual Property Rights of ideas

- Follow-up

By following all these steps, you will be able to create new activities/programmes to foster cooperative entrepreneurship in your classroom.