

The utility of user personas in higher education development projects

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Introductions

Prof. Michael Doherty

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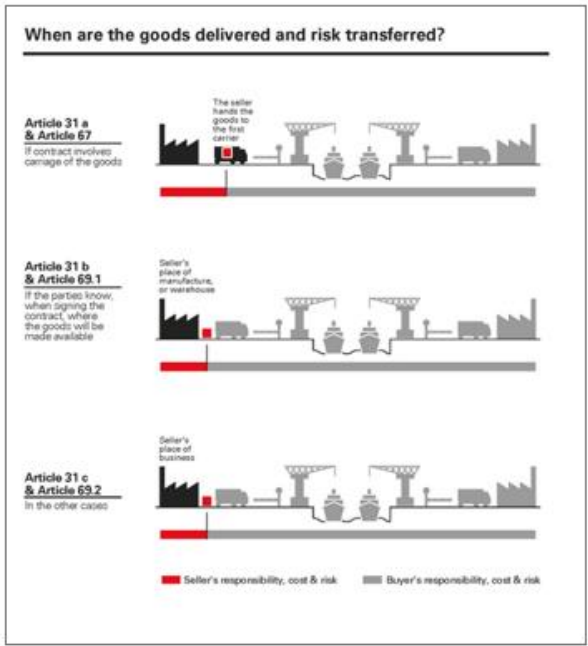
Dr Radka Newton

- MSc Management programme director, Senior Teaching Fellow, LUMS
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Our routes to design - Michael

Legal design

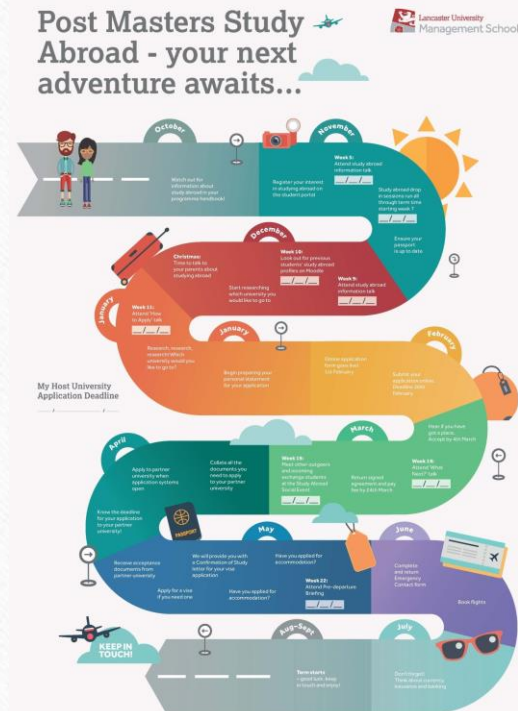
- Legal cartography; Visualisation of legal rights and responsibilities; legal design (LD)
- Writing on LD and disciplinarity; on cultural norms in design and law; on LD and constitutional principles.
- Projects on tenants' rights and curriculum redesign.



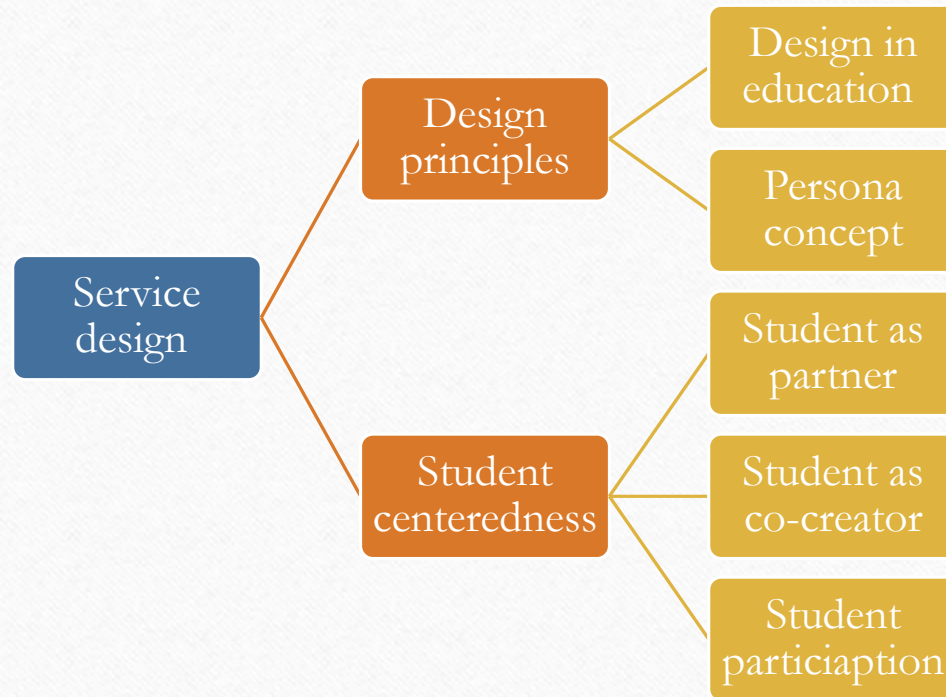
Our routes to design - Radka

Education design

- Student experience improvement projects – admissions, study abroad online marking
- Application of Lean methodology - Lean HE Global network
- Public service management (Osborne, 2010; Osborne et al., 2016) - MBA Operations Management module



Literature review



Service Design

Service design principles (Stickdorn et al., 2011)

- User-centered (empathy)
 - Co-creative
 - Sequencing
 - Evidencing
 - Holistic
- New discipline formed as a result of service economy and service marketing - community around this discipline only formed in early 2000, SD applied first in public sector - policy development (Cooper, 2019)
 - Public services, health, social innovation (Sangiorgi & Prendiville, 2017; Kimbell, 2009)
 - *"A service is something that helps someone to do something."* (Downe, 2020)
 - Tools and methods (Kimbell, 2014; Stickdorn et al, 2018)

Service design in education:

service blueprinting (Baranova et al., 2010)

defining education as service (Kuzmina et al., 2012)

registration, orientation and induction (Madden & Walters, 2016)

Design in education

- Teaching profession as design practice (Warr & Mishra, 2021)
- Carpe diem learning design – online learning Salmon et al. (2008)
- Educating the whole student (Weaver, 2008)
- Student as a user (Altay, 2014; Pazell & Hamilton, 2020) - connecting course design to student experience explicitly as a human-centred design process
- *Participatory design* for learning (DiSalvo et al., 2017) - co-designing curriculum, learner at the centre

Student centredness

- Student as a co-producer (Carey, 2013; McCulloch, 2009)
- Students involvement in curriculum design (Bron & Veugelers, 2014)
- Students as partners (Bovill at al., 2011) - students as co-creators of course design
- Engagement through partnership (Harrington et al., 2014)
- Student-centred learning – humanistic approach – person centred (Blackie at al., 2010; Tangney, 2014) - transforming students and ourselves

Concept of user persona

- User personas are a tool used in service design and are archetypes of actual users, often defined by their goals. Personas have a name and face and a backstory of relevant characteristics, interests and aims, which remain visible through the design process.
- Developed by Cooper (1999) in context of software design; used in product (and now service) development work



Norma

72 | Retired
Widow
Brooklyn, OH

Goals

Be able to take care of herself without having to worry about going out to get groceries.

Get groceries that require little effort to make.

Eat healthy foods that do not interact with her medicine



I'm a 72 yr old lady who lives alone. I've been having a hard time getting around lately. With my limited mobility, I have a hard time getting around in stores.



Feels burdensome asking other friends or family members to help her with everyday tasks (like going to the grocery store). She would rather spend her time and energy playing with her grandchildren

Technology

online shopping	●	●	●	●	●
internet	●	●	●	●	●
apps	●	●	●	●	●
mobility	●	●	●	●	●

Needs

- To be free from worrying about what she is going to eat due to her decreasing mobility.
- To be delivered healthy foods weekly

Frustrations

- Asking others for help.
- Walking around grocery stores.

Feelings

burdensome helpless
guilty
lonely



Nerdy Nina

"The book is way better than the movie!"

#booklover
#bookaddict
#booknerdproblems

DEMOGRAPHICS

Age: 25
Location: Sao Paulo, Brazil
Education: Software Engineer
Job: Q/A at Indie Game Company
Family: Lives with her boyfriend

TECH

Internet
Social Networks
Messaging
Games
Online Shopping



GOALS

- Discovering new books / authors to read
- Finding unique stories
- Cataloging book collection

FRUSTRATIONS

- Keeping track of different series
- Forgetting a book launch date
- Finding space for more books

READING HABITS

- Fast pace reader
- Never lends books
- Likes hardcovers and boxed collections
- Pre-order books to get them first
- Reads eBooks, but prefer physical copies
- Always finishes a book
- Loves binge reading and re-reading

FAVORITE BOOKS



American Gods
Neil Gaiman

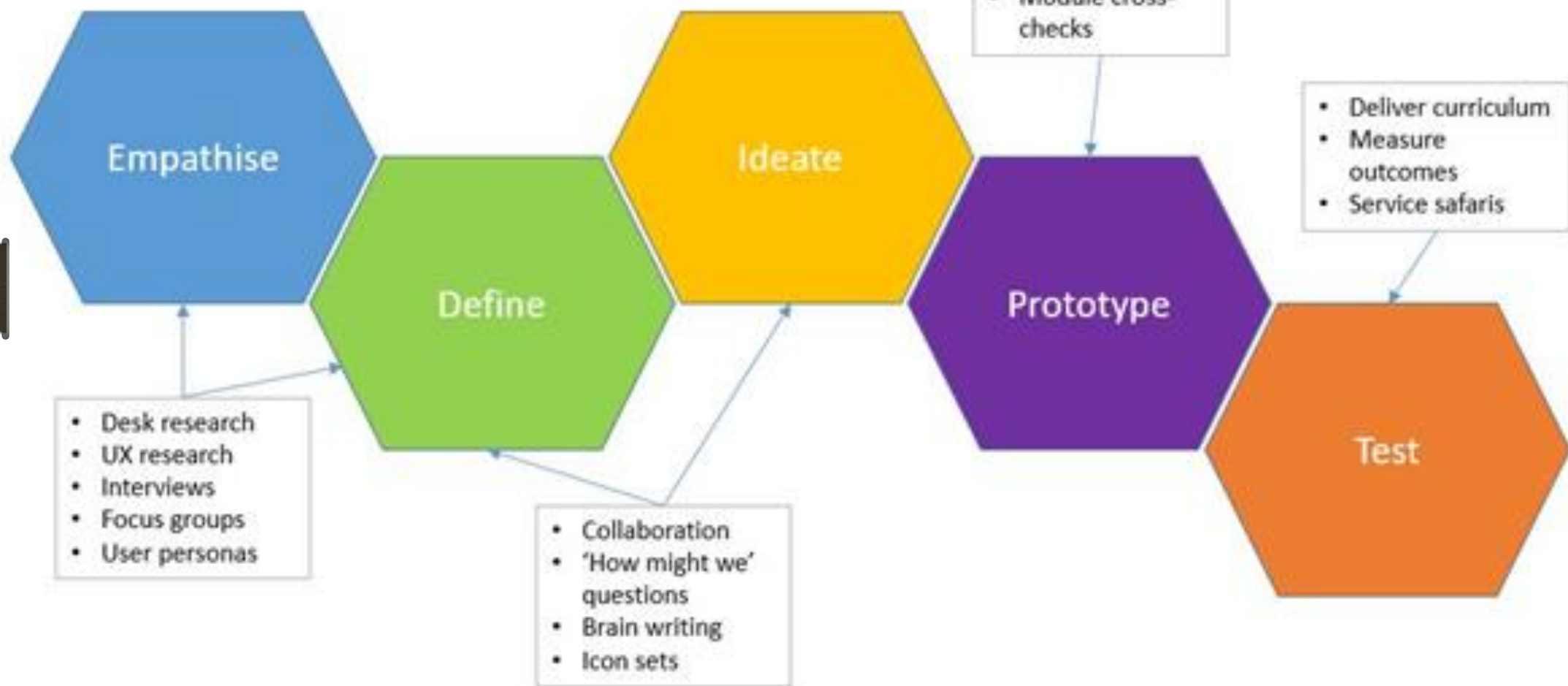


Harry Potter
J.K. Rowling



Ready Player
One
Ernest Cline

Stanford model of design thinking – as applied in the [UCLan project](#)



Benefits of using personas

Shift perspective from service provider to service user (and keep them visible in design process) – designers often revert to scenarios based on people like themselves (Cooper)

Promote understanding of and empathy for user

Can provide diversity and inclusion – not just in demographics, but in all other characteristics

They act as boundary objects – provide a shared basis for communication (Pruitt and Grudin)

Potential pitfalls in using personas

- Issues in the process of creating personas
- Stereotyping & exclusion of non-standard users
- Issues of over-reliance and under-reliance

Our practice and research

Service design approach to redesign of law undergraduate curriculum


- LLB, Year 1, Lancashire Law School, UCLan – design team of 6 staff with input from students and other staff
- Design process between re-validation (Spring 2018) and delivery (Sept 2019)
- Delivery to 180 Year 1 law students across the four core 30 credit modules in 2019-20 cohort.
- Evaluation impacted by Covid crisis

Service design approach to annual programme review practices


- MSc Management Lancaster University 2017-18 cohort 17 participants - all students, 1 staff
- MSc Management Lancaster University 2018-19 cohort 32 participants - all students
- MSc Management Lancaster University 2019-20 cohort 60 participants – all students
- University of Glasgow Business School, Undergraduate business studies, 17 staff, 10 students
- Edinburgh Napier University, PG Cert CAP programme, 8 students, 8 staff

y




 From: Blackburn; going to live at home. She is a single parent. Her daughter, is 17 and doing A-Levels. Her son is 13 and has autistic spectrum disorder. He is in a special education resource facility of a mainstream school. Her parents are elderly, on the whole well, but need increasing levels of care.



 From: Bolton; going to live at home, with parents and three younger siblings

m



 From: Wakefield, Yorkshire; going to live in IQ Halls of Residence

User personas in the law curriculum design

Co-created personas



- What are students on this programme like?
- Where are they from?
- Why are they here?
- What do we know about their family/friends/hobbies?
- What are their career aspirations?
- What are their fears and frustrations?
- What makes them happy?

What did the students say?

"...even if I am an introvert, we got to know each other well. It wasn't like... I was among friends rather than strangers..."

"I think it's good to have the emotional side too because I think especially with our degree it's just like go, go, go all the time."

"It is kind of comforting, in a way, to know that everyone is going through it together and that you're not the only person that feels sometimes, how am I going to get through this and stuff. "

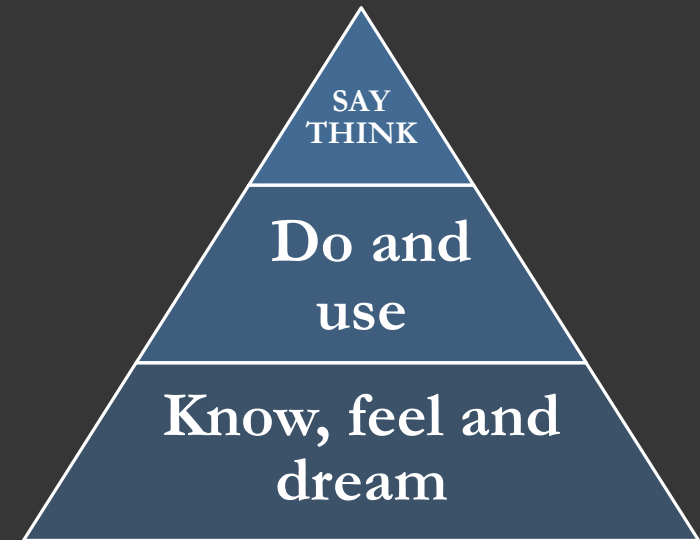
"...it helps students' frustrations get out. They will feel heard. When we had that workshop that was when I was like my god, finally!"

"...I feel it positively included everyone, we were able to all of us get involved and contribute for the improvement."

"Like at the end of the day we're human beings, we're not just robots so you need to think about the student well-being first, which this is the most thing I liked about this university. "

Conclusions

- ✓ User personas provide an enhanced method for ensuring student centeredness in curriculum design
- ✓ Co-created personas give students an enhanced voice and appreciation of being perceived as human beings



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