



e-Child News February 2013

Online Vocational Training Course on Children Ergonomics for Product Designers



E-Child Workshop

E-Child Workshop was held 12th December 2012 in Helsinki

The workshop was organised by The Finnish Association of Designers Ornamo. It consisted of reviewing the most recent version of the e-Child curriculum, including its structure and contents. It is based on the results obtained in the analysis of needs carried out earlier. In addition to this, the learning platform and the possible options that could enrich the contents (forum, newsletter, etc.) were discussed. The need for addressing sustainability/ecological questions was raised - even if these are not the core focus of the project, they need to be considered and brought up wherever providing links or complementary information is possible.

The facilitator of the workshop was Anni Puolakka / OK Do. Attendants of the workshop were: Finnish designers Sanna Myllys and Sannaliina Kuussaari, host/project partner Petra Ilonen, project partners Clara Solves, Carol Soriano, Patrick Blondeau, Véronique Legrand, Francisco Loras, Dolores Segura, Andrés Bosch, Kennet Lindquist, Anastasiya Simeonova and Angelina Lefterova / TT Tex-Technika Group, Bulgaria.



It was argued that the main issue when it comes to challenges faced by children (such as obesity) is the lack of information on the parents' side. The designers are responsible for trying work with this challenge (and should be supported in this by the platform by, for example, allowing them to gain information and ideas from the producers/factories regarding these issues). The problems should be tried to be solved instead of adapting to them: instead of just making sure that there are sizes large enough, how about

designing plates that function as guides towards healthy proportions, other devices that encourage the child to physically intense play, and so on? Designers/the project should attempt to change the problematic ways or patterns of thinking/behaviour.

Different methods of presenting the information was discussed. The platform should not resemble a cookbook with recipes but rather enable information and knowledge sharing and guidance through interaction. "If I study something, I'd like to know *how* to use this knowledge." It should encourage the participants to "learn with" it, instead of "learning about, or from". It is important to show, all the while, how the knowledge can be applied in practice. This can be done through, for example, best practice case examples which can inspire and help designers to apply the information and methods to their own design work and production. An innovation within the field of childcare product can be inspiring to other areas of children's product design, such as clothing, too. It is important to make sure and to assure the designers that the platform is providing information from the most up-to-date and competent sources. There should also be a balance between information from researchers/theorists, manufacturers/factories and designers themselves. Also, the information should be presented in a manner that allows exploring and studying the content on different depth-levels, allowing deeper concentration on each designer's individual focus area, and a more general studies when it comes to other areas.

The significance of designers' own contribution to the content of the website was discussed. It was deemed important that the designers produce content themselves for both better and more effective learning experiences as well as for relevant and interesting content.

Ideas presented included giving the participating designers tasks to carry out exercises such as making videos that observe children's behaviour at playgrounds or at meals. Gathering material like this from different cultures could facilitate understanding of cultural factors and help designers from different countries to learn from each other.

The challenge is: how to motivate participants to produce online content? One suggestion was that (equal amount of) contribution would be required from all the designers that participate in the learning course. The exercises could be carried out in teams in order to make this phase interactive, too, and to help the different actors in the field network with each other (the teams could include other professionals working in the field - not just designers). Overall an open approach to information- and knowledge-sharing should be promoted.

Many companies aim to offer consumers information about the products in an exhaustive manner: not only about how they can be best used but also the materials, how and where they are made, how they can be recycled, the history of the company, people behind it and so on. When it comes to ergonomics, the platform could help designers provide the consumers ergonomic knowledge related to their products in an interesting way.

The need for some kind of a recognition system or certificate was being discussed. Can the designers who undergo the training get a certificate/logo to post on their website/products? The cultural significance of this varies - e.g. in Germany the value might not be as significant as in Finland.

Next E-Child project meeting, workshop and visits to local children's clothing factories will take place in Sofia (Bulgaria) organised by BAATPE during the 5th and 6th of June 2013.





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