INCREASING FOCUS ON VULNERABLE GENERATIONS IN DESIGN TEACHING: THE DEVICE PROJECT

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THE PROJECT

The DEVICE project aspires to bridge traditional industrial design programs with ergonomics, usability concepts and user experience approaches with a specific focus on vulnerable generations.

It intends to address the need to modernize and develop educational programs with a specific focus on vulnerable generations, mainly children and elderly, and to become a milestone towards the modernization of design education.

To improve the design practice in the area of design for children, it is necessary not only to study and improve methodology, but also to transfer the gained knowledge to new generations of designers in order to ensure its use in design. We wish to contribute to the community by bringing up the discussion on how to transform our knowledge and teach how to design for children.

Professionals interviews: Interviews were conducted with professionals and sector specialists to ascertain their views on the training needs of design students and professionals. In total 27 interviews have been conducted in UK, Australia, Italy, Sweden, Denmark and Romania.

Literature Review: The reviews put into evidence information about training needs as well as the specific needs of elderly people and children to be taken into account in the design process.

A multidisciplinary training needs analysis has been conducted in order to define the learning and development goals. The training needs identified included: legal issues, empathy, end-user abilities and capabilities, ethics, methods, context of use, literature and theory, translation and tools, inspiration and information, constraints, evaluation, awareness raising, engagement, cost of usability, creativity, working a multidisciplinary team, materials, accidents and near-miss analysis, anthropometric library.

The nine modules will be tested through several pilots site among Europe:

- 4 pilots will be held in Italy;
- 2 pilots will be held in Sweden;
- 1 pilot will be held in UK;
- 2 pilots will be held in Romania.

STATE OF THE ART

Aims at analyzing and studying the current status of research and innovative practices on design for vulnerable generations and to define methodologies for involving children in product design.

The case study survey collected around 100 examples of educational programs, courses or projects related to design for children and elderly. Most of them (38%) are projects, followed by the category of courses, master programs, modules and workshops (29%).

The general impression from the survey is that there are fewer educational initiatives targeted at design for children and elderly than expected, indicating that there is more work to do in this field.

A competences portfolio has been arranged to form six categories of competences and training needs:

- physical/cognitive information about vulnerable groups,
- context and costs,
- end-user involvement and considerations,
- methods,
- inspiration and awareness rising,
- literature
- legislation.

Nine educational modules have been developed:

Module 1. Introduction to Design and HCI: initial overview of the topics and concepts;

Module 2. Market Analysis and Legislation: about societal issues and business principles;

Module 3. Context: tools to understand and analyze the context;

Module 4. User Capabilities: specific capabilities and limitations of vulnerable generations;

Module 5. User Involvement: how to involve users in the design process;

Module 6. Design: improve designers’ skills in managing a design process;

Module 7. Evaluation: evaluation methods to test and validate with users;

Module 8. Creativity: rain creative thinking and design;


The call for contributions for DEVICE Design Award is now open!

The DEVICE award is targeted to different types of design fields, and is divided into one student category and one category for professionals. Submissions describing innovative products and services or design methodology for working with vulnerable generations are equally welcome.

Deadline for submission is January 10th, 2014.

The winner will be invited to take part in the Award Ceremony and Final Event of the project that will take place in Italy on March 7th, 2014.

For further information please visit our website: www.deviceproject.eu/award.php