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Container Kindergarten Project as a Social Responsibility Project

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Abstract. “ACT FOR”, a social responsibility project unit is a sustainable solidarity platform that was established at the design faculty for the aim of creating collective act between designers and people in need. The main aim of this project is to enhance design students’ critical perspectives on how to prepare a social responsibility project for their local environment and work collaboratively with other disciplines. The design students are expected to understand the importance of social responsibility activities and its’ role for the universities and the community. They are also expected to learn how their attitudes translate into behaviour and action while they are questioning what just and unjust is in their local environment. This study reports on Container Kindergarten Project as a social responsibility project. Believing that the success of social responsibility projects should be in harmony with the needs of the community, “ACT FOR” designers firstly analysed the needs of their local environment. Later, we developed the project for a chosen primary school where 25 children were trained in a space that could not meet the ventilation, heating and spatial organization requirements and continued to provide education as an unhealthy living space for children. After the conceptual phase, we prepared the necessary drawings and found sponsorships for the implementation. With this project, the design students learned how to solve problems and make design management to finalize the project. They learned how to work as a team with different disciplines to ensure homogeneous distribution of tasks. At the end, the design students discovered the healing aspect of the design. With all difficulties and contributions, it taught the multi-dimensional education method that they never experienced before. As a result, the community-university relationship is one of the most important points in determining and meeting the needs of a community. Therefore, universities play a major role in raising awareness in this subject.

1. Introduction

This study aims to explain “Container Kindergarten Project” as a social responsibility project designed by the design team in the İzmir University of Economics, Faculty of Fine Arts and Design, which creates a space that allows the children to become happier. The project achieved a positive change through the power of design. Another aim of this study is to explain how the design for social need might be implemented. Our approach is to provide solutions that create better living spaces for children in need. During the implementation of this project, the design team, including students, is expected to understand the importance of social responsibility activities and its’ role for the community. This project enhances the design students’ critical perspectives on how to design for social impact and work collaboratively with community. This study reports on Container Kindergarten Project as a social responsibility project,



believing that the success of social responsibility projects should be in harmony with the needs of the community. Therefore, this project is both functional and aesthetic appeal that meets the needs of the community. It is not a design just of willing of the people, it is a design for social impact [1].

As mentioned in Bates (2019), Gabriela Marks claimed: “while the world we live in today is the most socially aware and connected in human history, too many people still experience the daily indignities created by social justice in all its variations” [1]. Therefore, in this project, we try to help the children in need through the power of design. In addition, it is using everyone’s expertise to create a comprehensive vision for the future. “Social design experiments, along with new developments in the study of learning, including research-practice partnerships, draw critical attention to how researchers and communities can work together to organize more just of social future” [2]. For example, as cited in Margolin and Margolin (2002), “architects, psychologists, social workers and others have worked together to explore the intersection of people’s psychological needs and communities, interior spaces that increase the feeling of pleasantness, excitement and relaxation and decrease feelings of fear and stress” [3]. I also believe that a successful project involves a collaborative approach with policymakers, lawmakers and end-users of the project as mentioned in Budds (2017, [4]).

In this paper, I want to begin a new discussion of design for social impact by proposing “Container Kindergarten Project”. In this way, social design projects can be successful in social and educational cultures and organizations, so that people can plan their own collective futures [2]. It is our hope that by articulating and exemplifying the principles and practices of social design experiments, we can inspire others to participate in continued engagement with this relatively new and we believe, powerful approach to design research as also claimed in Budds (2017). We believe that designers can make a difference. Increasingly, designers are taking prominent roles in the creation of initiatives for solving issues. Therefore, we believe that the university plays a major role in raising awareness on this subject.

Universities, particularly private ones, are standing in a highly competitive industry, therefore, the social responsibility projects are preferred methods for gaining a good reputation and advantages with other universities [5]. Carroll (1999, [6]) firstly mentioned the concept of social responsibility in the 1960s. He told that the term social responsibility was defined as an “awareness of the social impacts of any given practice” in the study of Jones (2002, [7]). Chile and Black (2015, [8]) show the article of UNESCO (1998, [9]) as an example which stated that it is not only the universities should educate the young people, also they should provide them with the awareness on social justice and educate them on how to apply their knowledge to the sense of social responsibilities:

“Article 1 (a) – educate highly qualified graduates and responsible citizens – (b) – educate for citizenship and for active participation in society – (c) – train young people in the values which form the basis of democratic citizenship and by providing critical and detached perspectives – Article 2 (c) enhance their critical and forward-looking functions – Article 9 (b) educate students who can think critically, analyse problems of society, look for solutions to the problems of society, apply them and accept social responsibilities [9]” (p.237).

2. Container Kindergarten Project Design for Children in Need

The design team firstly analysed the needs of their local environment. In the second step, the design team developed “Container Kindergarten Project” for a chosen primary school where 25 children were trained in a space that could not meet the ventilation, heating, and spatial organization requirements and continued to provide education as an unhealthy living space for children (figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1. Interior environment of chosen space



Figure 2. The building of a chosen space

We use six-step of problem solving which includes engagement, assessment, planning, implementation, evaluation and termination as mentioned in Margolin and Margolin (2002, [3]). In the engagement and assessment phase, the design team worked with the teachers of the students as a user of the existing space and analysed the needs of the users. The priority needs include the toilets and the place for cooking and eating. In addition, the students need new furniture and a place for their teaching activities. Ventilation and heating system should also be considered. In the planning phase, we concentrate on firstly how to translate our design ideas into the finished design. Creativity is the main element in the design process; however, creativity should be encouraged and tempered by the need for realism. The design must work and be able to be made. The more you break away from the reality, the more the project cost for the sponsors. Therefore, in the design process of a social responsibility project, a balance of creativity and reality is needed.

In this project, designed for children between the ages of 3-6, the most critical ages when children communicate with their environment, a system has been designed (apart from the spatially needed masonry and eating area) to use the outer space on both sides. The project involves two containers of 27 m². One of the containers is designed for eating area and toilets. The other one is used for activities of the children and education place. These containers, which are combined with a glass passageway, can receive enough sunlight inside. Glass walkway between two containers opens to front and back garden (figures 3-5).



Figure 3. A conceptual model with a technical drawing I (prepared by the design team)

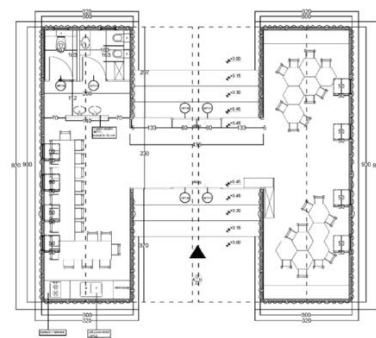


Figure 4. A conceptual model with a technical drawing II (prepared by the design team)

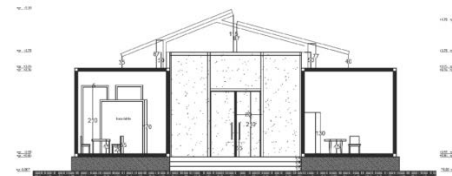


Figure 5. A conceptual model with a technical drawing III (prepared by the design team)

In the planning phase, all the necessary furniture according to needs was designed and produced in the design faculty by the design team of the project (figures 6 and 7). Then, the budget was calculated for all costs except furniture.



Figure 6. Seating units including storage below



Figure 7. Cabinets and shelves

In the implementation phase, the design team made sponsorships presentation to large-scale companies to explain the design of the project and the budget for implementation. Container Kindergarten Project was sponsored in the implementation phase from public and private sources (figure 8). However, such social responsibility project, funding and sponsorship is always a problem as also Singh (2016, [10]) mentioned. If a social responsibility project does not reach the people in need, we cannot call it a social responsibility project. Therefore, thanks to our sponsor companies who believed in this project.



Figure 8. The implementation phase of the project

In the evaluation and termination phase, we made an evaluation of the space use and the satisfaction of the users who are the children and the teachers. The total m2 of the project is satisfactory for all users. The glass passageway between two containers opens to the front and back garden, therefore, the teachers told that they could receive enough sunlight inside to make a reading activity with the children. As a result, the children have an education space that allows them to become happier which is the main of the project team (figure 9).



Figure 9. Container Kindergarten Project as a social responsibility project (designed by the design team)

3. Conclusions

With this project, the design team experienced the power of the design and how the design can heal people who are in need. In addition, the design team created a functional and aesthetic project that responds to social needs with a creative remedy. This project helps us to see the social problems more holistically and find lasting solutions that satisfy the needs and encourage the achievements of everyone. The success of this project is the significant involvement of end-users to the project and collaboration with policymakers and lawmakers.

During the design process, the design team learned how to solve problems and make the design management to finalize the project. The design team worked collaboratively with other disciplines to explore the intersection of users' psychological needs also in order to create an interior space that increases the feeling of relaxation and decreases the feeling of fear and stress. As a result, the community-university relationship is one of the most important points in determining and meeting the needs of a community.

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