

Cariño Project: Sustainable Baby Clothes Year 1

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Abstract: The article presents the development of the Extension Cariño project: sustainable baby clothes in its first year of operation. This is an action research carried out by teachers and scholarship students of the project with the partner communities.

Key words: education; environment; health; work; interdisciplinarity

JEL code: I

1. Introduction

Based on an integrated and interdisciplinary structure, which involves undergraduate and postgraduate professors and students from UniRitter, the University of Design (Fashion, Graphic and Product), in partnership with the Pedagogy Course and the underprivileged communities around Zona Sul and FAPAcampus, the Extension Project “Cariño: sustainable baby clothes”. The project proposal came from the interest of working in collaborative networks and knowledge exchange with strong intellectual capital, a good fit for projects of social inclusion, interdisciplinarity and sustainability. The conduction of the process is based on methodologies for the development of social projects, such as HCD (IDEO, 2017) and Sustainability, such as Manzini & Vezzoli (2002).

The overall objective of the project is to promote a culture of sustainability in communities close to UniRitter through training and practical teaching in the manufacture of baby clothes up to one year old. The clothes are developed through sewing techniques and manual processes of reutilization of pieces in disuse. Giving meaning to the actors involved in the development of work on social and environmental issues, together with the community, which requires the exchange of knowledge, as well as the possibility of interaction between all segments and responses to the needs of the population, besides promoting innovation in design and pedagogy with the production of knowledge in project networks for the dissemination of information.

In order to enable these families from the communities around the university, low-income families and in situations of social vulnerability, a graphic material, an easy-to-understand pedagogical booklet was created, an intuitive user manual on cutting and sewing, modeling of baby clothes and reuse of raw material from disused garments through the technique of upcycling (process of transforming products in disuse into new products of use). The process was started as a result of an immersion in the Vó Maria Day Care Center, in which the needs presented by the study community, Vila Cruzeiro, near the Ritter dos Reis University Center, South Zone Campus, were verified in March 2017.

The project is structured based on the indissociability between teaching, research and extension and contemplates general and specific principles of the curriculum of the courses involved, both graduation and post-graduation. Design, in its concept adopted by UniRitter, understands pollution as a form of waste and inefficiency

of the productive processes and as the loss of raw materials and inputs in the manufacture of products. The project bets on the ecoefficiency concept of a product in the various stages of its feasibility, in an environment built with artistic and cultural sense. The training of the students of the Fashion, Graphic and Product Design University comprises the creative use of technical skills in the project interdisciplinary subjects that improve the knowledge in research, innovation and development of objects for certain market niches. Pedagogy, in turn, develops interdisciplinary education work based on the idea of research in education, which implies research by academics, with insertion in diverse educational spaces, especially in communities around UniRitter-Zona Sul and FAPA campus. In the post graduation course, the topic of social inclusion is contemplated in several subjects and field research is developed from a perspective of theory-practice.

Having as main bias the reading and the diagnosis of the reality and the intervention in an interdisciplinary perspective of the project, one can propose significant contributions in the application of references that sustain social actions, since it adds new knowledge to the educational practice with approaches and different forms of insertion in communities. This form of interaction with society, through a research and intervention project, promotes the relationship between theory and practice and contributes to social development, the qualification of the poor, and the promotion of sustainability in local communities.

Based on the presented concepts, as well as on the actions in progress and operationalization, we seek the development of an interdisciplinary project that allows the interactive application of the academic community and surrounding communities of other institutions of Rede Laureate, which allows the project “Cariño: sustainable baby clothes” be built together, through open collaboration and the exchange of knowledge in an ongoing process of teaching and learning, thus disseminating the viability of applied techniques and knowledge generated and documented for the replication of national and international networking.

2. Methodology

For the completion of the project a methodology of Social Design HCD IDEO (2017) was applied, together with the methodology of Sustainable Design Manzini & Vezzoli (2002). For the analysis of the collected data, the interdisciplinary team quantitatively evaluated the metric data of the volunteers in order to validate the material developed for the workshop, didactics and printed material, as well as the technique of upcycling and hand sewing. The questions were divided into subject areas that correspond to the validation needs of the project.

The issues refer to personal development: knowledge of applied practice (Freire, 2001) and open collaboration (Manzini, 2008; IDEO, 2017), and the exchange of knowledge and learning (Freire, 2001; GWILT, 2014), upcycling and manual points (Gwilt, 2014; Paoliello & Souza, 2015); personal autonomy (Freire, 2001), social inclusion and the possibility of project networks (Capra, 2005; Manzini, 2008); and, finally, the application of printed didactic material and applied didactics (Freire, 2001).

To answer the questions we use intensity categories from lowest to highest on six scales. This likert-type scale requires participants to indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement with each of the statements, according to individual emotions and feelings during the training (Malhotra, 2006). The chosen scale is used to quantify all the answers, since some of the respondents may be illiterate. All members of the group participating in the workshop respond to the questionnaire in order to validate the techniques covered.

3. Results

It was noticed that the people involved in the training acquired the skills to develop the techniques discussed, which pointed to the possibility of reinventing it when necessary, in its application in other pieces of clothing, and for the feasibility of being taught to other people in the community, forming collaborative networks. Manzini (2008, p. 25) states that for the development of a design project there is a need to think about processes, uses and systemic discontinuity, or redesign, starting from the need to rethink the processes and projects within the sustainability applied to the socio-cultural system and consumption of products.

It was noticed that the communities which were close to the project in the year 2017 brought questions that guided the development of the pieces, giving feedback for the redesign and participating actively in the process of listing the needs of the institution and of choosing the prototypes that, as a matter of fact, would be held in the workshops. It was possible to create a network of knowledge and dissemination of information within the institutions served and community.

Manzini (2008) also proposes that designers within communities are able to promote and guide social innovation through projects in collaborative and interdisciplinary networks, as they can apply practical solutions based on the needs presented by society, as well as to develop possibilities of access effective implementation of the project. Because it proposes sustainable techniques in the cutting and sewing of baby clothes (Gwilt, 2014; Paoliello & Souza, 2015), upcycling, the technique adopted in the project, consists of creating models and seams adapted to the tissues and the pieces that are in disuse, making it an economical process for those who use the technique. There is also the recycling and valorization of a product that would be discarded, causing the new pieces to be re-entered into the fashion cycle as wearable quality clothes with emotional and environmental value.

The educational character of the extensionist action presupposes, as expressed by Freire (2001, p. 12), “[...] a curious presence of the subject in the face of the world. It requires its transforming action into reality. It demands a constant search. It implies invention and reinvention. “This conception refuses the idea of subjects transformed into objects — who receive in a docile and passive way the contents and information that others give them — and assumes the commitment to an effective learning process, in the context of a social and cultural reality, in which the learned-apprehended can be applied to concrete existential situations.” Only the ones who truly learn how to apply what has been learned, transforming it into their knowledge, and by applying this knowledge, can reinvent it” (Freire, 2001, p. 13).

From these concepts, the development of this project with an interdisciplinary focus enabled a significant interaction between the academic community and the communities around UniRitter in Porto Alegre. This has enabled Cariño project to build together, in a shared way, with open collaboration. Not only the exchange, but especially the production of knowledge in a continuous process of teaching and learning, disseminating sustainability viable through appropriate technique in training to act in project networks.

4. Conclusions

Project Cariño proposes the development of social technology in autonomous collaborative project networks, with knowledge exchange in strong intellectual capital for projects of social inclusion, interdisciplinarity and sustainability. In view of the above, we tried to develop and apply, through workshops, easy-to-understand teaching material, an intuitive manual on sewing, modeling and reuse of raw material from disuse (upcycling technique), as

a facilitator for training low income and in social vulnerability families.

It can be verified that the actors involved are gradually appropriated to the themes defended by the project, with emphasis on the daily life needs of socially vulnerable populations and the urgency and importance of sustainability as a fundamental principle of environmental issues. It is possible to say that the actions developed until then reveal a potential for innovation in design and pedagogical projects, since their developments are crossed by discoveries and the search for new answers to the challenges that are presented.

The Cariño project, in its first year, was able to achieve the objectives set and has as a proposal for the coming months, to finalize the didactic material in the form of an easy-to-understand pedagogical booklet for teaching and practice in other communities, besides carrying out the dissemination through the UniRitterInternational Office to other universities belonging to Rede Laureate.

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