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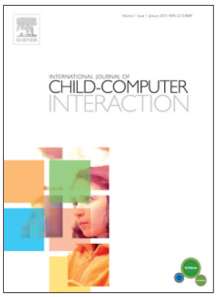

Future designers: Introducing creativity, design thinking & design to children

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ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

Future Designers: Introducing Creativity, Design Thinking & Design to Children

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Abstract

'Future Designers' is an interactive and participative crash course that aims to introduce to children the concepts and practice of creativity, design, and design thinking. The course targets multiple learning styles and intelligences, combining various learning approaches and tools, including lecturing (using a variety of media such as images, videos and music), creative question & answer, constructive – personal and collaborative – hands-on activities, play, humor and fun. The full course lasts 4-5 hours and can be delivered in a single or two sessions. This paper reports five pilot studies of the course, conducted over one year period with the objective of assessing the feasibility of the course and the attendees' satisfaction, as well as obtaining feedback. The pilots took place as follows: in-house with 8 primary school teachers, 4 post graduate students and 2 children; in a real classroom with 22 children 10-12 years old; in a classroom environment with 25 primary school teachers assuming the role of children; in a school environment with 20 children 10-11 years old and their parents, as well as in a school environment with 27 older children (12-15 years old). The outcomes stemming from all pilots are very promising and indicate that 'Future Designers' is an engaging and fun experience for people of diverse ages, which can fruitfully engage children (but also adults) in creative activities, and can generate interesting design ideas.

1. Introduction

Design thinking represents both a way of thinking and a process that can foster creative thinking. In absolute terms, design thinking stands for all the cognitive processes that a person's mind goes through when performing design. From a more practical point of view, Tim Brown, CEO of IDEO, has (re)defined design thinking as (Brown, 2008), "a discipline that uses the designer's sensibility and methods to match people's needs with what is technologically feasible and what a viable business strategy can convert into customer value and market opportunity."

'Future Designers' is an interactive and participative crash course that aims to introduce to children the concepts and practice of *creativity*, *design* and *design thinking*. The title of the activity is purposefully ambiguous, as it can be interpreted both as "*those who will become designers in the future*" and "*those who will design the future*". The main goals of Future Designers are to:

- Initiate children to a way of thinking and skill which can enhance learning, solve everyday problems and improve future employment prospects and quality of work.

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