Design Minds Tomorrow’s Classroom Toolkit

Research Statement

The Design Minds Tomorrow’s Classroom Toolkit (Wright, 2012) was commissioned as initial content for the launch of the State Library of Queensland Design Minds website (www.designminds.org.au) on June 29, 2012. It was designed in direct response to the Queensland Government Design Strategy 2020 “Build Design knowledge and Learning” mandate to “improve creativity and design in education and learning at all levels”, by “partnering with the (Smithsonian) Cooper-Hewitt (National Design Museum) and the State Library of Queensland to develop online design education resources” which “encourage knowledge and skills exchange in design education and to increase the capacity of Queensland teachers to teach creativity and design” (Arts Queensland, 2009:38). As such, the toolkit was used as a prototype for the design development of the website toolkit template, as part of the development of the Design Minds model (The State of Queensland, 2012; Duell, Wright & Roxburgh, 2013: 1970-1973). Inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy of learning and The Third Teacher (OW/P Architects, VS Furniture & Bruce Mau Design, 2010), the toolkit builds on learnings from previously authored secondary school design workshop programs, with a specific focus on uniquely facilitating youth awareness of the social, cultural, technological and environmental impacts on the design of spaces for learning. It aims to develop the characteristics of design thinkers, in particular “Empathy”, “Integrative thinking” and “Collaboration” (Brown, 2008). The context considers application transference for a broad geographical audience of non-designers, and within existing Australian education benchmarks.

This toolkit, authored for the first known online design education platform of its kind in Australia, is part of a “key initiative to enact a government priority for state-wide cultural change through design-based curriculum” (Duell, Wright & Roxburgh, 2013:1965) by “empowering a ‘bottom-up’ network of community partners, while advocating through evidence-based research, for future ‘top-down’ support from Government” (2013:1979). Approximately 60 educators were engaged to access, provide feedback and promote the pilot content of this toolkit, as well as participate in a hands-on professional development workshop utilising exercise content, prior to its launch on June 28, 2012 (2013:1975). Toolkit impact is measured and geographically tracked by users optionally entering their school and post code before downloading. Having met the initial success measures of the investment agreement, with 38% of toolkit downloads accessed by users in non-metropolitan locations (Duell, Wright & Roxburgh, 2013:1975), there is tangible evidence that it has helped influence non-designers (mostly school educators) to value the design thinking process in developing and engaging a broad range of creative and rational thinking skills, and informing subject areas outside design.

This pilot toolkit has prompted ongoing authorship of toolkits in alternative disciplines of design for the Design Minds website, and a growing community of educators accessing the website and attending Design Minds professional development workshops at the Edge, State Library of Queensland. It also inspired John Paul College, Brisbane to engage students and teachers in a 2-day community engagement participatory design workshop entitled Learning Environment 2050 with QUT School of Design students and educators on 15-16 August, 2013. It has facilitated further discussion about design-based learning in Queensland which links design practice, research, government and education to consider design education as integral to addressing social, economic and environmental challenges. It is an important model that addresses the lack of evidence-based research needed to influence the potential future integration of design into the Queensland and National curriculum, through collaboration between secondary and tertiary education sectors, government and public institutions. Public access to the toolkit on the Design Minds website has allowed dissemination of the value of design, and of learning design skills and behaviours, and the Design Minds model to a wider target youth and educator audience. The Design Minds online platform was referenced in the Queensland Government Arts Queensland funded Knowledge Economy Market Development Mapping Study (Wright, Davis & Bucolo, 2013: 32, 68) as a significant Queensland curriculum independent design education/research program.


Duell, C., Wright, N., & Roxburgh, J. (2013). Design minds: An online design education platform for non-designers to enact cultural change. In Reitan, Janne Beate, Lloyd, Peter James, Bohemia, Erik, Merete Nielsen, Liv, Digranes, Ingvild, & Lutnaes, Eva (Eds.) Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference


