

## **Building Partnership with the Society through Early Childhood Development Project in Siwalankerto**

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Siwalankerto environment is a giant laboratorium that can support an interesting learning process. Petra Christian University Campus is located in Siwalankerto area with its plural community in which most of the people are moslems. As a new comer in the neighbourhood, our campus must play an appropriate role in order to be accepted and supported by the Siwalankerto community. This circumstance has made the service learning method that is developed in our classroom become more spesific, which is building social partnership to the neighbourhood around our campus.

Holding service learning method in architecture subjects is not easy. Sometimes service learning method needs to be modified. The class needs to be arranged in special condition, according to the time schedule of the class.

In early 2012, our class was requested to redevelop an early childhood learning center for the poor community in Siwalankerto. It was provided by the local government. The condition of the building was unsuitable to be used by a large number of children who learn in that place. During the design process, our students learnt a lot of new things. It made the students learn about caring and respecting others, developing new skills of their psychomotor abilities, and developing their critical and creative thinking.

This type of learning process could build social partnership with others and influence our students' way of thinking. It broadened their vision of knowledge and mostly improved their soft skills. They reflected that they had learned new things besides major subject that has been taught. They also learned new experience that was taught by the marginal community. Students in other architecture subjects that do not implement Service Learning will not get these experiences.

*Keywords : Service Learning, Children, Architecture, Society, Social Partnership.*

### **Introduction**

Architecture and Children AR. 751 E is an optional subject that can be chosen by students in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. The learning objective of the subject is doing exploration about children in architecture, in

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order to understand children's spatial needs. This is important for the students, so they will have images of how they should design children's space or children's facilities. In the first 3 weeks of the schedule, students are doing discussion and theory development. It follows by site exploration to meet the users than they develop design proposal to be presented to the users. The subject has 3 credits for its learning process, including the application of Service Learning method.

### **The study of Affordance of Place that Challenge Children's Spatial Needs**

Last year was the first time for this class conducting Service Learning method. In August 2012, we decided to take PAUD Srikandi project and started the class by developing the theory understanding. In that time students learning topic was about the theory of affordance in Children's space. The theory of affordance is a theory that describe the relation about things and human perception vice versa. This theory outline is according to which affordances are relations between the abilities of things and features of the environment. In this case, for example light bumps into receptors and causing spatial sensation to human.

In the beggining of the study, we let our students exploring some early childhood education center. We have already chosen the school to be explored in detail. During observation, we ask students to observe folding elements of learning space that attract children the most. We ask them to analyse what kind of affordance that being responded by the children during play time. Our students mentioned some points of the space that attracted children in how they behave while playing. After the exploration students found interesting things that can build their basic understanding about children's space , such as :

- The spatial area which is folded is intersting place and give potential affordance for children to use it beyond adult imagination. Children like to use the area , in order to do imaginative play .
- They realize that the layout of the school has influenced how the children behave. Case such as school with minimum space of open space has caused children play in their classroom, and children are not eager of playing and running around.
- Most of the children like interactive things to play with.
- Children likes interactive things and elements of surprises during playing.
- Children prefer to play with loose particles than fixed particles.
- The mixed use area that being found in exploration has made some children are not independent in doing things. They let older people doing it for them.

Those basic theories than become basic concepts in developing future design development using Service Learning method.

# Building Partnership Through Srikandi Early Childhood Development Project

Program of Child-friendly City that was being proclaimed by our government , is the program of our national children and women role minister. The programs state that city should be accesible for the children so that it supports children rights.



Fig. 1 – New Location of PAUD Srikandi Siwalankerto

PAUD Srikandi Siwalankerto is an early childhood development center that has been pioneered by our local government. It lays near our Campus. It location is surrounded by housing neighbourhood and a bit step into the rural area, in the village of Siwalankerto. This learning center is funded by our city government. In the future, it will be developed as a pilot project for the other early childhood learning center within the city.

After meeting the users, we informed that they will need future development. The condition of the building was not suitable enough for the numbers of the children who used the facility.They need bigger space and better classroom. Government has already fulfilled the previous proposal and they will funded the future development of the building. City Government has prepare masterplan to develop future child-friendly complex . The future facilities will have playing arena, sports fields, and fishing pond. It will support the new early childhood development center in the future.



Fig 2 – Site Exploration



Fig 3 - Meet the Users : Parents and Teachers



Fig 4 - Old PAUD Srikandi Siwalankerto

After several intensive meeting with the users, the next step is continued the drawing development design development drawing. Department has organized design development team to continue the project . The member of the team are lecturers and students who did the preliminary design drawing.



Fig 5 – Learning Space New Ambience

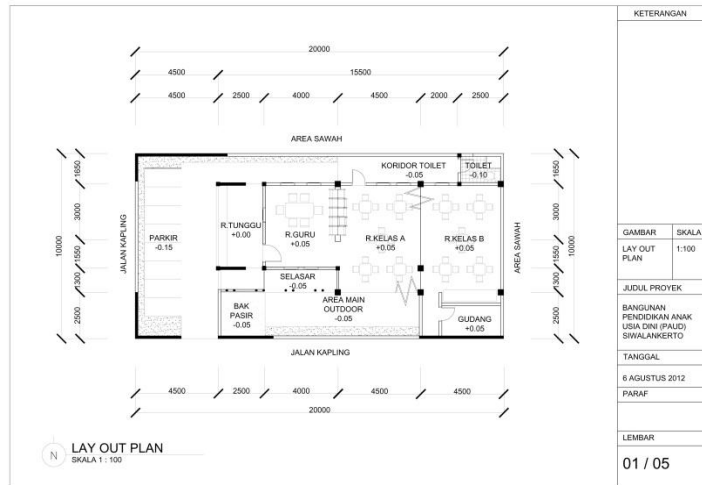


Fig. 8 – New Layout Plan Development for PAUD Srikandi

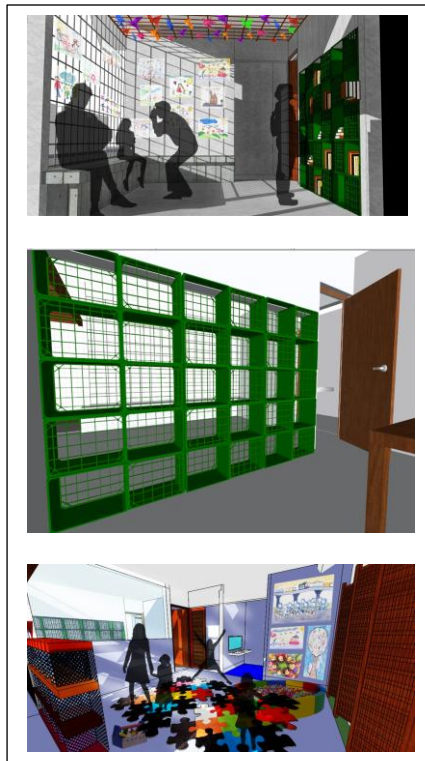


Fig. 9 – New details developed by students using recycle materials, such as bottle packaging and recycle board.

The new concept for the new PAUD Srikandi was to maximize the space, not just in physical space, but also the programs within the space. The new PAUD Srikandi wants to facilitate the

children needs of playing and their active behaviour. Our students proposed multiuse space that can adopt maximum programs within it, such as learning, playing, performing, and also story telling. They also manage the space so that the partition can be folded, and the space can be adjustable to the programs. The concept of the spatial partitions mostly are not permanent partitions, it can be moveable or playable. The partitions itself can be multiused, it can become display boards at once. Some partitions also being designed to create interactive plays and surprises activities, as being observed in previous student exploration.

The other alternative concept is to make it as a vertical school building, which propose vertical space that can facilitate all learning needs. Student also propose hydroponic gardens which is hanging so that children can also learn about plants and environment. The vertical concept has better ideas for good cross ventilation for the classroom but it is higher in budget.

After discussion with the users, design drawing proposal was being submitted and proposed to the them. The team that being set by department will help accompanying the users to realize the design idea. The team then finalize the design and budget proposal, so it become the complete proposal to the City Government in realizing the new PAUD Srikandi Siwalankerto.

## **Reflection of The Projects**

At the end of semester, we ask students to make Service Learning Report. The report show us how students this methods impact the way of thinking. The reports show that :

- They realize that designing building with the users are not as easy as what they think in previous studies.
- They think design more careful, because it is including the budget to realize it.
- They are more emphatic to people.
- They learn how to take and to give to others.
- They think more before they speak because they want to respect others.
- They learn how to cooperate with other students and the community.
- They learn new skills about how to face the children during the observation. They try to attract them, not to make them scared of their present.
- They learn how to speak to the local government during the exploration.
- They learn about problems management, problems solving, time scheduling, and decision making.
- They learn that users are partner in design. In that case, students learn that design communication should be 2 direction. They learn to bridge communication between academic society and non academic society ,too. They learn the soft skills about translating design language into non-design language vice versa.

Building Partnership through this Service Learning has also cause the community learns several things such as :

- They respect the us as partner in live.
- They support our learning needs in many ways.
- They also learn how to take and to give .
- They help us of being partner in solving the problems together for better community.

Other important things that can be learnt through this Service Learning Project are :

- Running the project is not as easy as it being scheduled. It needs good community approach, good management, and good responsibility among people who being related to it.
- Respect and responsibility is very important to build good partnership with other. This project has become a new experience for our Department in building good partnership among Local Government, Early Childhood Development Center in Siwalankerto and our campus itself.
- This project can give benefits in supporting Service Learning Methods of Architecture Department for long term. In other circumstance, local government will also support us for other campus events and other campus academic programs.

## **Evaluation**

It is not easy to conduct service learning methods in architecture subject. We realize that architecture service learning should be done in a long term. It should be understood that this project might lack of masterplanning. This is our first experience to conduct the service learning method to our class. Hope better understanding about this methods will improve the time planning , so that the project can be supervised for long term.

## **Questions**

- According to previous experience,most of the Service Learning project only being done in a short term. We have limited semester and limited students in short term. One of the biggest problem is the time schedule that cannot be matched together. The other problem is the university policy. How are these problems can be manage in order to get better service learning aplication in the future?
- The other problem that we found in doing Government community project with Service Learning methods is the time schedule, because we depend on government decision . By the time writing this paper, the budget of the project was not being decided yet. But we still have

good relation with the PAUD Srikandi and the local government . Hope that this project can be done continuously.

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<sup>1</sup> After the design proposal submission, architecture department decide to continue the design proposal into preliminary design.