

Creating an interactive methodology by changing the current process of searching for a product into a co-design process specifically for clients with Autistic Spectrum Condition

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Designing a new interactive methodology

People with disabilities, figure 1, are being supported to become more and more independent. This has changed a lot during the years. According to Parmenter (2008) during the 1700's, people with disabilities were isolated as much as possible. Nowadays, health care organisations create products for their clients. That is why there are a lot of products designed specifically for people with disabilities to help them in their daily life. However, because these different products can be found at different organisations it is very hard for clients together with their caregivers to find them.



Figure 1: Target group

The Digital Health Center is an organisation which is creating a database in which many of these products are presented with an added possibility for members to rent these products and test them. This initiative is set up to help people with disabilities find products more efficiently. However, it is not known how this process goes nor is there any research yet conducted about the process of how people realize they need a product all the way to finding the right product. This leads to the following central question: How can a co-design tool enable autistic clients and their caregivers to learn more about the client and their needs, and together select an appropriate assistive product that serve these needs?

Field research in combination with an iterative design project is conducted to provide an answer to this question. Also using some information gained during desk research. With the field research the goal was to find what part of the process needed improvement and whether the clients are involved as much as possible. By conducting surveys and expert meetings the design problem was established from which the new methodology and accompanying tool is derived. However, the research showed that there was no problem concerning the current process. Therefore, the design problem changed from improving the current process by solving the current problems to changing the current process into a design process to help clients find the appropriate product more efficiently.

The new methodology is tested with multiple people with disabilities and their caregivers to check whether it would help or not. The solution found for making the process more efficient as well as have the client and caregiver gain new insights in the client and their needs is to add an extra step within the current process.

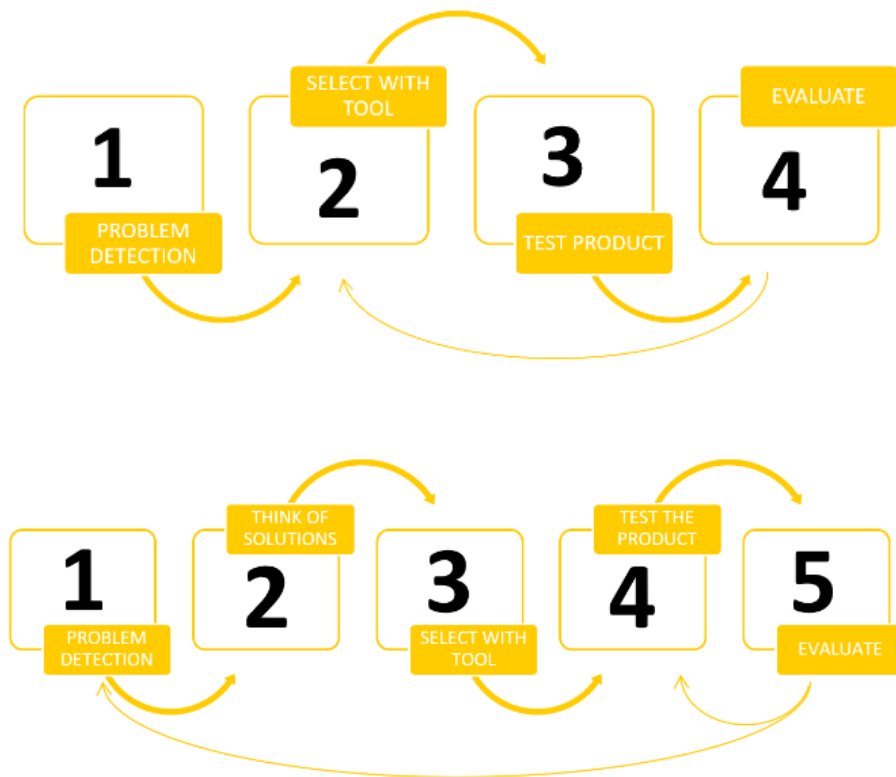


Figure 2: From current process (4 steps) to new process (5 steps)

The step added to the new process, figure 2, challenges the client to think about for what they actually need a product. This is done through asking certain questions in order to stimulate design thinking. Thinking about what the exact problem is by thinking of possible solutions can help people with a disability to feel more independent as well as more secure about the product they are going to test. This is because they can be in charge when searching for a new product and not the caregiver. Changing the current process of searching for a product from a normal methodology into a design methodology helps the client and caregiver find the product more efficiently. They will be able to look more specifically for what type of product will and will not help with their specific needs, even if the end product was not made for that specific problem description or disability.

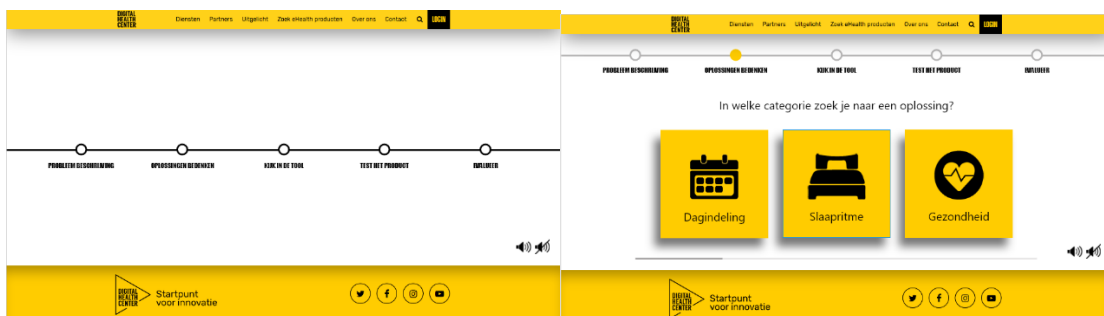


Figure 3: Final product

To further improve the methodology and accompanying guiding product, figure 3, even more a future vision is presented in which the recommendation is to conduct some more research on what type of questions would trigger the clients most while thinking about possible solutions.

Parmenter, T. R., 2008. The present, past and future of the study of intellectual disability: challenges in developing countries.. *Salud Pública Méx*, Volume 50, pp. 124-131.