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Designing Toys for Visually Impaired Children: Attitudes and Responses - Abstract
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Children born with no sight generally follow a different pattern of development compared to children born with sight. They may have delays in physical, cognitive and emotional development. The play behaviour of children also display their progress in development, therefore observing the play behaviour of visually impaired children has been a method in assessing at which stage of development a child is in. Yet, it has been observed in many cases that blind children seldom engage in play and they seldom handle objects through their own will. Interaction with objects is vital for the blind child, for the child to develop a *sense of self*, an understanding of *object permanence* and of *spatial concepts*. How could this interaction be encouraged?

The paper I would like to present at the symposium is based on experiences I have gained through visits I carried out to schools and homes of visually impaired children for my PhD research. These visits (in the UK and in Turkiye) revealed that all children had individual abilities and interests in interacting with objects. Each visit has been a source of inspiration for toy ideas that I developed for the children. The toy examples I hope to present will illustrate my approaches as a designer to each design situation. I will describe the toys, and the reaction of the children to the toys. I will criticise certain decisions I took and attitudes I displayed, which may be common to many designers, and I will suggest certain modifications for the improvement of some of the designs. The paper will also stress the importance of spending time with and getting to know the user group for a designer. The paper will conclude with some final remarks on the characteristics and play behaviour of visually impaired children in relation to the objects around them.