

The Impact of Team Learning on Sustainable Design

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The overall sustainability movement is gaining more attention and momentum with general consumers. Gam and Banning (2011) and Smith (2017) noted that the number of consumer's social and environmental concerns and the number of designers and manufacturers supporting the eco-friendly mentality is increasing.

Business and apparel companies highlighting this issue include Esprit, Patagonia, Marks & Spenser, and Stella McCartney, and these numbers continue to increase (Mirvis, 1994) and Fletcher (2008). However, according to a study by Yoh and Kim (2016), only slightly over half of the Textiles and Apparel curriculums in the United States offer one or more courses on sustainability.

Individuals in the educational field need to prepare today's students to survive in the 21st century work environment. As noted by Edelkoort, L. (2015) *Anti-Fashion's Manifesto*, "institutions seem to be oblivious to the new world." Edelkoort goes on to say that the fashion world was still operating in the 20th century. Other disciplines have acknowledged the need for students in an educational setting to cooperate and learn in teams. Not so with fashion.

Tackling real-world problems while simultaneously preparing the students for the professional environment can make sustainability more tangible and meaningful to students ("InTeGrate," n.d.). Developing and providing a concrete application to their knowledge and skills learned in the classroom can help the students develop a greater awareness of the choices they make and how these choices fit into a grander societal context ("InTeGrate," n.d.).

The college graduates of today enter into a world regularly presenting them with problems that do not have unique or straightforward solutions (Donnelly, 2004). Additionally, teamwork has become an even more critical part of the organizational structure, especially as businesses move to cross-functional teams to improve their effectiveness.

This study juxtaposes the concept of team learning and sustainability to create a more robust, more conceptual approach to real-world industry challenges while developing the students' ability to produce a garment that focuses on the conservation of fabric during the patternmaking and garment construction process.

The study, conducted in a capstone course, began with a discussion on defining sustainability. The students were divided into teams of 3-4. Each team created a sustainable garment that fit into their final collection using environmentally friendly fabrics, post-consumer clothing, or a combination.

Students responded to the following questions, (1) What were your initial thoughts on sustainability? (2) What challenges did you face in designing your garment? (3) How did the concept of sustainability influence your final design or your design thinking process? (4) What impact did your team have on your design process? (5) As a team member, what did you learn mentoring your teammates through the

sustainability design process? (6) Has the sustainability and team learning process changed your design thinking? Would you use a sustainability process again?

This study highlights the significant issue of sustainability and the valuable experience of working in a team. Both concepts are crucial and vital in students' fashion educational experience.

References

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