

## Sustainable Innovations and Empowerment: Redirecting Pedagogy Strategies in Fashion

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Sustainability education has been developed, but typically in a formal manner of specific courses or programs (Connell & Kozar, 2012). The objective of this research was to introduce sustainability seamlessly into the curriculum of a seemingly unrelated course in a way that would empower students instead of paralyzing them (Palmer, 2017). Subsequently, another goal was to give students an opportunity to make immediate course to practice connections by encouraging students to incorporate sustainability into their project work. Allsopp, DeMarie, Alvarez-McHatton, & Doone found that proximity in real-time aided bridging theory to practice (2006).

All sixteen female participants were sophomores enrolled in Fashion Technology Applications, a required core class for fashion design majors. To introduce sustainability to the class, students were asked to briefly research sustainable innovations that could be applied to the fashion industry and share them with their classmates in a group discussion. This request was designed to frame sustainability in a manner that focused on advancements, rather than setbacks or negative components. The request also indicated it was not a requirement, but a chance to share. After the discussion, a required course project focusing on developing fashion illustrations on Adobe software was introduced with an addendum; if sustainability was incorporated, extra credit would be given. Upon receiving IRB approval, a post-project qualitative survey was developed and given to the students who agreed to participate in the study. Responses from fifteen of the sixteen students were received and analyzed for effectiveness of the project.

Feedback for the sustainable innovation discussion was solely positive from all participants. Comments such as “I learned a lot from it, we should do it more often” were frequent. The survey started by asking if the student incorporated sustainability in any of their previous works, 11 answered no. When asked how the class discussion changed their views on sustainability, themes that emerged were increased interest and surprise at the broad range of sustainable innovations. For example, one student said, “hearing about all the eco-friendly ways to create clothing inspired my designs.” Another commented, “I wasn’t aware how many options are out there for sustainable options.” When asked if they will include sustainable components in their future work, thirteen students responded positively and two said possibly. One commented, “with the knowledge I obtained, I do see myself incorporating it more in my future designs.” Another explained, “it’s hard not to think about the effect clothing will have on the environment while designing.” When analyzing the responses to what would promote sustainability in their

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future work, several students mentioned having more knowledge and access to sustainable resources would help.

Through a designed course discussion on innovation, the research introduced sustainability into a required fashion course. The research also provided students opportunities to incorporate sustainability into their projects. Additionally, the activity prompted students to consider fashion sustainability earlier in their academic career. Future studies include looking into how to break barriers between sustainable practice and other required courses and researching further methods of education to promote sustainable action.

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