INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Vol 14, Issue 9, (2024) E-ISSN: 2222-6990

Emphasizing Creative Thinking in Fashion Design to Cultivate Vocational College Students in China

Ye Ye, Dr. Rina Binti Abd Shukor
City Graduate School, City University Malaysia
Email: rina.shukor@city.edu.my, 313378816@qq.com

To Link this Article: http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i9/22796 DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i9/22796

Published Date: 01 September 2024

Abstract

This study investigates the role of creative thinking in fashion design education at vocational colleges in China. Recognizing that fashion design is a discipline that requires both technical skills and imaginative capabilities, this research aims to explore the effectiveness of current educational practices in fostering creativity among fashion design students. The study analyzes how theoretical knowledge, practical application, industry exposure, and global perspectives are integrated into fashion design programs to enhance students' creative abilities. Additionally, it examines the challenges posed by traditional educational approaches in China, which have historically emphasized rote learning over creative development. Through a comprehensive evaluation of existing curriculum and pedagogical strategies, the study seeks to offer recommendations for enhancing creative thinking in fashion design programs. These insights are crucial for preparing students to meet the evolving demands of the global fashion industry. The findings highlight the need for an educational shift towards more innovative and student-centered learning approaches that can better nurture creative talent in China's burgeoning fashion sector.

Keywords: Creative Thinking, Fashion Design Education, Vocational Colleges, China, Curriculum Development.

Introduction

STEM education is an educational approach encompassing the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, treating them as an interconnected unit and promoting the integration of these disciplines. The preference lies in adopting a cohesive interdisciplinary learning paradigm for STEM rather than a narrow focus on STEM alone (Bakhshi et al., 2013). To effectively implement STEM education, a shift is needed from the traditional epistemology to a design epistemology, as proposed by (Kelley & Knowles, 2016). There is a need to shift the emphasis from explicit knowledge and fixed curricular units towards a pedagogical approach known as "connected learning" to foster and improve students' creative performance (Ito et al., 2013).

Moreover, including hands-on activities within the context of STEM education encourages students to approach challenges more physically and facilitates their exploration of different solutions (Han et al., 2016). Therefore, it is imperative for students pursuing a career in fashion design to engage in practical exercises that integrate STEM knowledge. The scope of a fashion designer's job encompasses the creation of clothes, accessories, and footwear. This entails several tasks such as sketching, pattern design, material expertise, and other specialized knowledge. Fashion designers must possess the ability to articulate and elucidate their creative thoughts. Acquiring expertise in design drawings, printing design, material understanding, and other professional knowledge can be aligned with disciplines such as engineering, mathematics, and science. The correlation between the domain knowledge of fashion design and the domains of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics has been noted (Gleason, 2018).

Specific material attributes such as weight, color, waterproofness, or breathability are examples of scientific knowledge regarding the components of STEM knowledge that are relevant to design. Examples of these properties include leather. Technological expertise encompasses a range of disciplines, including graphic drawing, material processing such as computer graphics and leather processing, and tool utilization such as 3D printing, leather carving, laser engraving, laser cutting, digital printing, hand tool operation, and sewing machine proficiency. The understanding of human ergonomic issues and engineering design processes, such as the design considerations for strap width and length, handle thickness, backpack dimensions, and the use of cardboard patterns, notches, and pleated designs, as well as expertise in bag-making processes, including tailoring, sewing, and computer bag pattern making, are considered within the realm of engineering knowledge.

The e-commerce industry's fast growth has brought about significant transformations in the fashion design sector in China. The issue of whether the fashion design business can adequately accommodate the job needs of the numerous fashion art graduates annually has emerged as a noteworthy concern. Our initiation into the field of fashion design, as well as our pursuit of essential design education, was delayed. Based on available data, the inaugural fashion design school session commenced in 1980 inside the dyeing and weaving arts department of the erstwhile Central Academy of Arts and Crafts. It has been a mere three decades since that time. During three decades, several notable designers emerged, including Zhang Zhaoda, Wang Xinyuan, Wu Haiyan, Liu Yang, and Guo Pei. Significant advancements have been achieved in fashion design education and the fashion business. However, compared to European nations, there remains a substantial scope for further improvement.

The present state of fashion design in China highlights a deficiency in our designers' accurate knowledge and comprehension of the distinctive attributes inherent in the art of fashion design. The primary emphasis of this discussion pertains to the educational aspects of fashion design inside higher education institutions. The primary objective of fashion design education in China is to address the limitations present in the current system and foster independent thinking and action among students. This entails shifting from theoretical concepts to practical application, transforming design ideas from conceptualization to the production of ready-to-wear garments, and bridging the gap between academic institutions and the market. The aim is to bring about a transformative transformation in fashion design education. Colleges and colleges serve as nurturing environments for the development of aspiring fashion designers. The instructional

methods and pedagogical concepts employed by educators directly impact the proficiency of designers, the advancement of China's fashion design industry, and the rate at which Chinese designers gain international recognition.

Currently, fashion design education in our nation is associated with some drawbacks. Colleges and universities must establish their unique attributes and foster innovative designers capable of creating brands and assuming the responsibilities of China's fashion industry. This should be done by leveraging their inherent strengths, considering the distinctive requirements and availability of professional personnel in the fashion industry across various regions, and aligning with the knowledge structure necessary to meet talent demands. The reform of the education system in fashion design plays a crucial role in shaping the future of the fashion design industry. Therefore, universities, firms, and students must prioritize and consider this matter significantly. In the present day, the rapidly evolving domain of fashion design education may benefit significantly from the pedagogical approaches employed in wealthy Western nations. Simultaneously, it is imperative to establish a path of growth that aligns with our country's specific circumstances. This essay aims to comprehensively analyze the ongoing change in fashion design education in China, examining it from several perspectives.

Approximately ten years ago, considerable discourse surrounded the concept of fashion design. Currently, many students opt for the field of fashion design as their chosen academic discipline. The field of study has gained significant popularity and is now considered a prominent academic discipline. This phenomenon can potentially expedite the growth and advancement of the sector within a limited timeframe. However, while considering the realm of education, it is evident that there are several disadvantages associated with this phenomenon. For instance, the class size transitioned from being initially modest, with just a limited number of pupils, to becoming larger, accommodating several dozen or even over one hundred people. In such circumstances, teachers may have challenges adequately considering all students' needs and perspectives during class discussions and communication. A significant increase in pupil absent-mindedness has been observed. The author posits that kids would benefit more from possessing individuality rather than conformity in light of this phenomenon. In a small classroom setting, educators can provide personalized guidance to students based on their qualities and engage in meaningful exchanges with them. This facilitates the identification and resolution of challenges, enabling students to leverage their strengths and capabilities fully. All students can experience a heightened level of engagement, particularly in practical classes.

The problems with the current approach to education are not limited to the ones mentioned above. To teach design effectively in higher education, instructors must think outside the box and be willing to be questioned by students, cultivate an environment where students feel safe expressing their emotions and imaginations and incorporate real-world examples into classroom discussions and exercises.

The design curriculum at colleges and universities often emphasizes theoretical studies that center on the conceptualization of design, the methodologies and principles involved in the design process, and the delineation of design processes and regulations. The significance of students' practical application has gone unnoticed. The instructional material does not align well with the organization's specific requirements. There is a lack of study and research conducted by domestic colleges and universities about the social demands for fashion design education. The consistent

nature of our school's operational method, curriculum design, and instructional material has resulted in a deficiency in market knowledge among the students.

The students are unable to gather data and engage in market expansion activities. The degree of their design remains limited to the primary stage. They cannot convert their creations into competitive products to satisfy the market's wants. The works produced by the individual in question exhibit peculiar and impractical characteristics. From a market perspective, students cannot accurately assess or forecast market demands. Hence, the exclusive utilization of a singular "teaching" approach fails to adequately facilitate students' profound exploration and cultivation of their selves. Educators need to assist students in enhancing their proficiency in fashion style design and structural modifications while ensuring their mastery of the fundamental principles of fashion design.

Additionally, Judith Butler's work evolved in the midst of collapsing boundaries between the living and non-living due to the advancement of biotechnology, which led to the cyborg becoming a new cultural ideal (Elizabeth Wissinger, 2016). The fashion industry's persistent exploration of established limits in pursuit of innovation, along with its historical engagement with androgyny and the manipulation of gender, made it a fitting subject for the emerging field of queer studies, in which Butler's work eventually showed important. According to Elizabeth Wissinger (2016), queer studies expanded beyond the conventional binary categories of "male" and "female" to explore a broader range of human experiences. This academic discipline sought to challenge the traditional heteronormative social order by critically examining the power dynamics that marginalised certain sexualities. Thus, Judith Butler’s work critically examined the concept of subjectivity by shifting the emphasis from the influence of clothing on identity creation and monitoring to its impact on shaping the physical body. This approach challenged and questioned how identities are established, reinforced, and accepted by societal norms and practices.

Butler challenged the assumption that only two sexes are male and female. She further questioned the separation between the physical and mental aspects of identity. She theorised that the body is not a natural occurrence but a product of social interactions influenced by established power dynamics (Elizabeth Wissinger, 2016). Butler also introduced fashion as a means of communication that reflects power dynamics, where the clothed body serves as a statement about current power structures. Elizabeth Wissinger (2016) emphasised by analysing fashion through the lens of social and cultural theory, it is important to emphasise the interaction between these theories and the fashion industry. The contributions of prominent intellectuals, presenting their theories and notions about the field of fashion. The importance of comprehending fashion and how the fashion industry may actively and analytically interact with their concepts. It is important to highlight to serve as a crucial manual and resource for students and scholars in diverse fields such as fashion, dress and material culture, the creative industries, sociology, cultural history, design, and cultural studies.

The conceptual foundation expanded the potential areas of exploration in the field of fashion studies where previous research primarily examined the social implications of clothing, such as Valerie Steele's influential studies on fetishism, handbags, and corsets, as well as comprehensive analysis of fashion's cultural and social significance in "The Culture of Fashion"

by (Breward, 1995). However, according to Elizabeth Wissinger (2016) introduced a fresh perspective to fashion studies by challenging the established notions of gender and psychological symbolism that fashion purportedly conveyed. In contrast, other than emphasising men's or women's fashion as fixed categories, Butler's research demonstrated the fragility of these distinctions. This allowed for a new perspective, viewing clothing as strategic tools within the dynamic interplay of societal forces, including those related to gender and queerness.

In China, many higher education institutions place significant emphasis on the cultivation of creative thinking abilities as an integral component of their academic programs. Educational programs are commonly designed with the intention of stimulating critical thinking and fostering creativity by challenging established norms and promoting the development of unique and inventive ideas. The development of creative thinking skills in fashion design students is a complex process that requires a comprehensive strategy encompassing several elements such as theoretical knowledge, practical application, collaborative efforts, exposure to industry practices, global perspectives, and ongoing evaluation and feedback. Despite the presence of hurdles, diligent endeavors are being undertaken to surmount them and establish an enabling educational milieu that nurtures creativity in the realm of fashion design in China.

It is important to recognize that, from a historical perspective, the Chinese educational system has encountered criticism due to its prioritization of memorization-based learning and examination-oriented assessments, potentially impeding the development of innovative and imaginative thinking. Nevertheless, numerous educational establishments in China are currently engaged in proactive efforts to change pedagogical approaches with the aim of cultivating creativity and fostering critical thinking among students.

Fashion design is a creative discipline that merges functionality and aesthetic innovation as a means of self-expression. Within the realm of fashion design, it is imperative for an accomplished fashion designer to not only demonstrate their aesthetic comprehension but also seamlessly incorporate contemporary trends. Hence, the task of creating a fashion design that garners public recognition is a challenging one, necessitating fashion designers to possess a combination of robust imagination, original thinking, and comprehensive knowledge of clothes design theory. Hence, it is imperative for educators to prioritize the enhancement of students' individual capacities and foster their creativity in a focused manner while nurturing aspiring fashion design students. This approach ensures that students are adequately equipped to embark upon a career in the field of fashion design upon completion of their formal education.

Fashion designers working within the dynamic and highly competitive fashion business are expected to possess an exceptional level of creativity, innovative thought processes, and a well-established knowledge base in the theory of professional clothes design. The significance of these factors is further highlighted by the following main issues.

Firstly, globalization and localization have been widely discussed in academic literature. This paper aims to explore global design perspectives concerning these concepts. The lack of enough emphasis on integrating global design views may impede students' capacity to develop designs that effectively resonate with worldwide audiences. The process of blending

global influences with the portrayal of local culture provides a significant challenge, which influences the formation of a unique and authentic creative identity in China. China, with a population of around 1.4 billion individuals, represents a significant market in its terms. Chinese enterprises have historically been content with generating revenue inside domestic boundaries without venturing into international markets. However, the economic and cultural transformations experienced in the last two decades have caused Chinese enterprises to adopt a more liberal perspective. The global community has become stronger than ever, regulations have been updated, and culture has been modified. Chinese enterprises across diverse sectors are increasingly expanding globally, with technology, e-commerce, and gaming emerging as prominent drivers of this trend. When organizations embark on new ventures, they are confronted with certain prevalent challenges that must be addressed (Givon, 2021).

Objectives

RO1: To explore the relationship between students' level of creative thinking and the Fashion design program.

RO2: To analyze the Fashion design programmed to enhance College students' creativity level.

RO3: To construct recommendations in the current Chinese education in fashion design programs to cultivate creative thinking within students.

Method

Research methodology is crucial to any academic or scientific study, outlining the systematic approach used to gather and analyze data. It serves as a blueprint, guiding researchers in selecting appropriate methods and tools for data collection and analysis, ensuring reliability and validity of the results. The methodology includes the choice of research design, selection of participants or subjects, and the specific techniques used for data collection, such as surveys, experiments, or observational studies. By clearly defining the research methodology, researchers provide transparency and enable others to evaluate, replicate, or build upon their work.

Quantitative Methods

Quantitative methods refer to research techniques that primarily rely on collecting and analyzing numerical data. These methods quantify behaviors, opinions, or other defined variables, and generalize results from a larger sample population. Quantitative research is often associated with a positivist or empirical approach, where data is obtained through measurable and structured techniques such as surveys, questionnaires, or experiments with controlled variables. The strength of quantitative methods lies in their ability to provide statistical, objective, and conclusive results. They are particularly effective in testing hypotheses or theories, identifying patterns, and making predictions. This approach is widely used in fields such as economics, psychology, sociology, and natural sciences, where the aim is often to establish generalizable findings and causal relationships between variables.

Quantitative Research Methods and Approaches

Objective: Collect and analyze data to identify trends and quantify the impact of creative thinking on student outcomes.

Methods:

Surveys: Design and distribute surveys to a larger sample of students, educators, and industry professionals. Questions should measure attitudes towards creative thinking, its incorporation in the curriculum, and perceived benefits.
Statistical Analysis: Use statistical tools to analyze survey data and identify significant patterns and correlations.
Experimental Design
Objective: Test the effectiveness of new teaching methods aimed at enhancing creative thinking.
Methods:
Pilot Programs: Implement pilot workshops and activities focused on creative thinking in selected vocational colleges.

Qualitative Methods

Qualitative methods in research involve collecting and analyzing non-numerical data, such as words, images, or objects, to gain insights into concepts, opinions, and experiences. These methods prioritize the depth and detail of understanding and interpretation, often focusing on the 'why' and 'how' of human behavior and social phenomena, rather than quantifying the frequency of these occurrences. Techniques commonly used in qualitative research include interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and texts or media content analysis. Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative research does not seek to generalize findings to a larger population, but rather aims to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of complex issues through detailed exploration of individual or group perspectives.

The strength of qualitative methods lies in their flexibility and adaptability to explore nuanced human behaviors and societal trends. This approach allows for exploring topics where numerical data may not provide the full picture, such as exploring cultural practices, personal experiences, or social dynamics. Qualitative research is interpretative, often involving an inductive process where themes and patterns emerge from the data, as opposed to testing predefined hypotheses. It's particularly valuable in fields such as anthropology, psychology, sociology, and education, where it is crucial to understand the depth of human experience and societal interactions. However, this method's emphasis on context and subjective interpretation also means that findings are often more subjective and may have limited generalizability.

Qualitative Research Methods and Approach

Objective: Gain in-depth insights into the current state of fashion design education and the role of creative thinking.
Methods:
Interviews: Conduct semi-structured interviews with fashion design educators, industry professionals, and students. Questions should explore their experiences, challenges, and perceptions of creative thinking in fashion design.
Focus Groups: Organize focus group discussions with students to understand their views on creativity in their curriculum and its impact on their learning.
Case Studies
Objective: Examine successful examples of integrating creative thinking into fashion design education.
Methods:

Selection of Case Studies: Identify vocational colleges in China known for innovative fashion design programs.
Data Collection: Gather detailed information about their curriculum, teaching methods, and student projects through site visits, interviews, and document analysis.
Analysis: Compare and contrast these cases to identify best practices and common success factors.
Curriculum Analysis
Objective: Evaluate the current fashion design curriculum in vocational colleges.
Methods:
Document Review: Analyze curriculum documents, course descriptions, and syllabi to assess the emphasis on creative thinking.
Gap Analysis: Identify gaps where creative thinking could be better integrated.

References

Adriani, N. (2018). Electronic copy available at : Electronic copy available at : *Grou*, *23529*(2), 1–45.

Aksela, M., & Haatainen, O. (2018). Project-Based Learning (PBL) in Practise: Active Teachers' Views of Its' Advantages And Challenges. *Integrated Education for the RealWorld : 5th International STEM in Education Conference Post-Conference Proceedings*, 9–16. http://hdl.handle.net/10138/304045

Alencar, E., Feldhusen, J. F., & Widlak, F. W. (1975). Creativity training in elementary schools in Brazil. *Journal of Experimental Education*, *44*(2), 23–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220973.1976.11011544

Apuke, O. D. (2017). Quantitative Research Methods : A Synopsis Approach. *Kuwait Chapter of Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, *6*(11), 40–47. https://doi.org/10.12816/0040336

Bakhshi, H., Hargreaves, I., & Mateos-Garcia, J. (2013). *A Manifesto For The Creative Economy*. *April*, 128. http://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/a-manifesto-for-the-creative-economy-april13.pdf

Bertola, P. (2018). Reshaping Fashion Education for the 21st Century World. *Cumulus Think Tank*, *3*. https://re.public.polimi.it/retrieve/e0c31c0d-0a52-4599-e053-1705fe0aef77/BERTOLA_soft_landing.pdf

Bonamente, M. (2013). *Statistics and Analysis of Scientific Data*. Springer.

Breward, C. (1995). *The culture of fashion: a new history of fashionable dress*. Manchester UP. http://library.bathspa.ac.uk/items/11680

Brown, S., & Melamed, L. (2012). Experimental Design and Analysis. *Experimental Design and Analysis*. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412984218

Brown, T. (2009). *Change by design: How design thinking transforms organizations and inspires innovation*. HarperCollins.

Bryman, A., Teevan, J., & Bell, E. (2009). *Social Research Methods* (Second Can). Oxford University Press.

Calavia, M. B., Blanco, T., & Casas, R. (2021). Fostering creativity as a problem-solving competence through design: Think-Create-Learn, a tool for teachers. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, *39*(November 2020). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2020.100761

Christoff, K., Irving, Z. C., Fox, K. C. R., Spreng, R. N., & Andrews-Hanna, J. R. (2016). Mind-wandering as spontaneous thought: A dynamic framework. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, *17*(11), 718–731. https://doi.org/10.1038/nrn.2016.113

Clark, V. L. P., & Ivankova, N. V. (2016). *Mixed Methods Research: A guide to the field*. SAGE.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches: International Student Edition*. SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

De Bono, E. (1985). *Six thinking hats*. Key Porter Books. https://doi.org/https://worldcat.org/title/15732680

Douk, L. B. (2006). A Study on Fashion Design Pedagogy for the Development of Creativity: With Emphasis on Intuition. *Journal of the Korean Society of Clothing and Textiles*, *30*(1), 487–496.

Ermila, M., Rifqiawati, I., & Lestari, D. (2022). *Online learning videos to develop creative thinking skills of students*.

Faerm, S. (2012). Towards a Future Pedagogy: The Evolution of Fashion Design Education. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, *2*(23), 210–219.

Fasko, D. (2001). Education and Creativity. *Creativity Research Journal*, *13*(3–4), 317–327. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15326934CRJ1334_09

Ferrari, A. (2013). Digital Competence in Practice: An Analysis of Frameworks. *Joint Research Centre of the European Commission.*, 91. https://doi.org/10.2791/82116

Flack, J. D., & Feldhusen, J. F. (1983). Future Studies in the Curricular Framework of the Purdue Three-Stage Model. *G/C/T*, *6*(2), 2–9. https://doi.org/10.1177/107621758300600202

Gillies, R. M. (2016). Cooperative learning: Review of research and practice. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, *41*(3), 39–54. https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2016v41n3.3

Gleason, N. W. (2018). Higher Education in the Era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. In *Higher Education in the Era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution* (pp. 1–229). Yale University. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-0194-0

Göçmen, Ö., & Coşkun, H. (2019). The effects of the six thinking hats and speed on creativity in brainstorming. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, *31*, 284–295. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2019.02.006

Gu, X., & Li, L. (2022). China's Experience of Online Education during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Policies, Lessons and Challenges. In V. Dennen, C. Dickson-Deane, X. Ge, D. Ifenthaler, S. Murthy, & J. C. Richardson (Eds.), *Global Perspectives on Educational Innovations for Emergency Situations* (pp. 285–293). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-99634-5_28

Guo, C., & Wan, B. (2022). The digital divide in online learning in China during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Technology in Society*, *71*, 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2022.102122

Hahn, S. (2022). *Critical thinking or critical creativity : applying De Bono' s six thinking hats to speech-language pathology education and practice*. University of Louisville.

Halabi, K. N. M. (2018). *The Impact of giftware Design and Its Packaging Attributes on Consumer Purchasing Intentions Behaviour in Malaysian Context*. Lancaster University.

Hammouda, M., & Abu Jarad, K. (2020). The Effect of Using Six-hat Strategy on Developing Creative Thinking Skills among Fourth Grade Students. *Journal of Research in Curriculum Instruction and Educational Technology*, *6*(3), 39–80. https://doi.org/10.21608/jrciet.2020.100010