

RESEARCH TITLE

A human-centered design approach to fashion design education

Name: Dr Reshma Neshane (R.N.) Harvey
Supervisors: Professor Piet (P.J.) Ankiewicz
Dr Francois (C.F.) van As
Institution: University of Johannesburg, South Africa
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ABSTRACT

Historically, design has taken place within a technology-driven design paradigm, in which the designer, based on inward-looking practice, knowledge and values, shapes material products for mass-market consumption. However, national and international design discourse is shifting towards a human-centered design paradigm that foregrounds the needs of users and positions the user as an active, collaborative participant in the design process. Aligning with this shift, there is a need for general design education to transform from an inward-looking, lone-genius ethos to one that considers inclusive, collaborative design with users. However, when it comes to fashion design education, pedagogy continues to align predominantly with a technology-driven design paradigm that fosters an inward-looking, lone-genius ethos where students design for themselves or for imagined users. This study challenges such conventional pedagogy in fashion design education, by proposing a human-centered design approach in which students are educated to become agents of change in transforming the existing design situation to a preferred one upon entering the professional world. However, fashion design education, particularly from a human-centered design approach, is an underdeveloped researched area, and it lacks academic rigor and scientific investigation. Nonetheless, such research is important given the national and international shifts in design praxis and education. The extent to which such an approach might add value to pedagogical activity within fashion design education in the South African higher education context has not been scientifically explored as yet. As such, this study aimed to explore and establish underlying design principles for a human-centered design approach and its effects to fashion design education at an urban South African higher education institution. In this study, effects refer not to cause and effect relations, but to participant views and experiences regarding the design principles of human-centered design. This aim was guided by the overarching research question: what are the pedagogical strategies and underlying design principles of a human-centered design approach and its effects to fashion design education at a higher education level? This study employed design-based research, which was selected due to the need to establish theoretical design principles with which to design and implement human-centered teaching and learning interventions

within fashion design education. Embedded in design-based research, the study employed an interpretive paradigm and a qualitative research approach that utilised multiple methods of data collection from multiple sub-sets including a theoretical, professional and educational scope. Through a series of teaching and learning interventions, this study contributes to scholarship on fashion design education. It proposes nine human-centered design, 16 fashion design praxis, and 16 design education pedagogy design principles that, in combination, constitute the elements of a philosophy underlying fashion design education in higher education from a human-centered design perspective. The contribution of this study is ground-breaking, research-led teaching as there does not appear to be similar doctoral study undertaken in fashion design education in higher education either in South Africa or internationally. Moreover, research-led teaching embedded in a human-centered design approach to fashion design education in a higher education context has never been scientifically explored through iteration cycles. From a pragmatic perspective, the study contributes a refined teaching and learning intervention for adaption and evaluation in future research which, it is hoped, may improve fashion design educational practice.

Keywords: fashion design education, human-centered design, design-based research, teaching and learning interventions, design education pedagogy, fashion design praxis

The full thesis can be found at <http://hdl.handle.net/10210/296531>